

Chemical, Pharmaceutical, and Cosmetic Industry

Chimia 49 (1995) 128

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ISSN 0009-4293

Cerbios-Pharma SA*

In the middle 1970's the management of *Unione Farmaceutica SA*, a wholesale distributor of pharmaceutical products to the pharmacies of Canton Ticino, decided to diversify its business by investing in production activities. As a consequence of this decision, three companies, located at the former's premises in Barbengo (TI), were formed:

- *Cernitin SA* (1976): a marketing company for its daughter company, *Cernelle AB* located in Engelholm (Sweden), specializing in the production of pollen extracts. The products are targeted at the Health-Food and ethical markets with indications for the treatment of *benign prostatic hyperplasia* (BPH).
- *Bioferment SA* (1976): a production company based on fermentation technology for the production of a proprietary, live *lactobacillus* (*enterococcus faecium* SF-68) to be used both in the veterinarian and human field for the treatment of intestinal disorders such as diarrhea.
- *Sapac SA* (1979): a production unit specialized in the synthesis of tetrahydrofolic acid derivatives (folinic acid, 5-methyltetrahydrofolic acid) through in-house developed technology. These products are used in the 'rescue therapy' when treating solid tumors with antifolates (methotrexate, 5-fluorouracil) and also as vitamin supplements in folate deficiencies (*post-partum* depression, folate malabsorption in elderly people *etc.*).

The production units in Barbengo operate under GMP rules and are certified for the production of pharmaceutical bulk materials. The production unit in Sweden also operates under GMP rules being certified for the production of finished, non-sterile pharmaceutical products.

In 1987, the three companies were brought under a financial Holding named *Chemholding SA*. They have been recently merged into a single company named *Cerbios-Pharma SA* (1994). The newly formed company employs 41 people in Barbengo, of which 16 have an academic background. Its R&D expenses for 1994 have been at 16.7% of sales, thus indicating the importance given by the management to innovation, especially to the in-house development of new technologies and products in the fields of organic synthesis, microbiology, and novel galenic preparations.



Figure. The premises of *Unione Farmaceutica SA* in Barbengo, site of *Cerbios-Pharma*'s two production units

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