

DACHSER & FERCAM Italia

A new era dawns
for logistics in Europe





Green light for a new chapter in groupage logistics to and from Italy

A real milestone: By establishing DACHSER & FERCAM Italia, Dachser is further expanding its high-performance overland transport network and strengthening its groupage and contract logistics business in Italy. Customers throughout Europe stand to benefit.

It adds up to 314 long and arduous kilometers: from Modena, Italy, the A22 motorway climbs ever more steeply up to the Brenner Pass, which straddles the Austria-Italy border at an altitude of 1,370 meters. The truck is loaded with pallets of espresso machines—recognized as the epitome of Italy throughout Europe and beyond. For Bernardo, a driver from Verona, the route via the Brenner Pass is familiar ground and yet special every time: “The view of the snow-capped peaks, the wide, sweeping orchards, all those rushing streams—che bello!” Bernardo has to have a great deal of patience to navigate the regular traffic jams that occur on this, the busiest road link between Austria and Italy, especially during the vacation season. He takes it all in his stride: “An Alpine pass is and will always be a challenge of nature.”

Italy’s topography and geography make it both attractive and particularly challenging for logistics companies. The boot-shaped peninsula stretches almost 1,200 kilometers from the Alps in the north to the Ionian Sea in the south. Its coastline measures around 7,600 kilometers. With an area of 301,340 square kilometers and almost 59 million inhabitants, Italy is one of the largest countries in Europe. Over 70 percent of the population now lives in urban areas, especially in the conurbations around Milan, Naples, Turin, and the capital Rome. One fact has long characterized Italy and still does to this day: in the southern regions of Italy from Abruzzo to Sicily, an area called the Mezzogiorno, the per capita economic output is only half as high as in the north. Manufacturing has a correspondingly smaller presence in the south. →



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Dr. Gianfranco Brillante, Managing Director DACHSER & FERCAM Italia

The connection between rail and truck—that's what the name FERCAM stands for. As a combination of the Italian for rail, "ferrovia," and for truck, "camion," the word symbolizes the Italian logistics company's business model from when it was founded in 1949 in Bolzano, South Tyrol: the transportation of goods by rail and truck. The joint venture DACHSER & FERCAM Italia is now starting a new chapter in logistics history.

In this logistically challenging environment, Dachser and Fercam, a long-established logistics company headquartered in Bolzano, have developed and continuously expanded an intensive partnership in groupage handling since 2003. Fercam knows the Italian market inside and out and has a nationwide network of branches. It has reliably distributed groupage shipments from Dachser's European network in Italy for over two decades. Conversely, Fercam fed Italian goods, such as the espresso machines in Bernardo's truck, into Dachser's Europe-wide network—a solid, tried-and-tested team of network partners.

A milestone for Dachser and Fercam

In March 2024, the partnership reached a new level with the launch of the joint venture DACHSER & FERCAM Italia S.r.l. Both companies had signed an agreement months earlier under which Dachser acquired 80 percent of Fercam's groupage and contract logistics divisions. "This step was a significant milestone for us," explains Dachser CEO Burkhard Eling. "With this acquisition, we were able to close the last gap and round off our own groupage and contract logistics network in the major continental European markets. We're strengthening our network in Southern Europe and at the same time creating the conditions for further growth."

Hannes Baumgartner, Managing Director of Fercam, believes the new arrangement offers great potential: "Continuing the groupage and contract logistics business under the umbrella of the Dachser network is the right step to secure positive development and future growth in Italy and Europe." The trustful cooperation that these two family-owned companies, Fercam and Dachser, have enjoyed over the past decades underpins the fact that both plan for the long term and share the same values.

One thing that is constantly emphasized in these days of joint reorganization is how each

side is familiar with and appreciates the other. "Mutual trust has grown over the years we've spent working together. We each know what the other brings to the table and how we can translate that into benefits for our customers and our network," says Alexander Tonn, who as COO Road Logistics at Dachser played a key role in supporting and managing the acquisition process from day one. DACHSER & FERCAM Italia will be managed by Dr. Gianfranco Brillante, who headed up distribution and logistics at Fercam for many years and now reports directly to Tonn.

Even though Fercam and Dachser have enjoyed a well-oiled partnership at all operational levels over the years, merging two logistics systems under the Dachser roof is a challenge. Roland Hillenbrand is all too aware of this; he was responsible for implementing and organizing the joint venture during his time in the Mergers & Acquisitions department at the Dachser Head Office in Kempten. "It was an incredibly exciting process that was delivered by many outstanding people on both sides," he recalls. Today, Hillenbrand is Head of Finance of the new European Logistics Italy business unit. "After Dachser and Fercam signed the contract in August 2023, everything happened in quick succession. The reorganization was carried out at breakneck speed—and with no interruptions to ongoing business operations. Achieving a feat of that magnitude is possible only if everyone is convinced it will be a success and pulls together."

When two become one

When Francesco Comerlati, Head of Sales in the joint venture, recalls the announcement of the acquisition, his eyes still light up: "In the middle of August, when it feels like all of Italy is on vacation, the news electrified everyone. Then things went from 0 to 100 in five seconds. There were of course a few skeptics, but even so, the enthusiasm for the new joint venture was palpable everywhere." He goes on to say there was always a



Two illustrious brands growing together



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Alexander Tonn, COO Road Logistics at Dachser

bit of adventure involved: "In our teams, we immediately saw the great potential of DACHSER & FERCAM Italia for customers, but we didn't know how to calculate it. We just knew it was really, really big."

Preparations for integrating Fercam's Distribution and Logistics divisions into the Dachser network began back in November 2023. This carve-out phase required both sides to move closer together. "It wasn't just about transferring locations and employees to the new joint venture, but also about preparing the systems and processes for a successful launch," Hillenbrand says. "Above all, this calls for many in-person meetings and discussions." Since August 2023, the 263 kilometers between the Dachser Head Office in Kempten and Fercam's headquarters in Bolzano have seen a lot of back-and-forth traffic, in addition to numerous meetings, information events,

and video conferences. "Because we'd been meeting with the same group of people for years, representing levels from top management to operations, a real exchange of ideas was possible during this transition phase. We then collected, processed, and brought those ideas together to continuously improve all processes," Comerlati says. "That tapped into a lot of strength."

Leveraging the home advantage

And the DACHSER & FERCAM Italia launch required a concentration of that strength. A look at the figures makes this clear: with almost 1,000 employees and 47 locations throughout Italy, Fercam has brought a broad base to the new joint venture. "The outstanding logistics infrastructure that Fercam has built up →



The Brenner highway: One of Europe's main traffic arteries



With this acquisition, we're rounding off our own groupage and contract logistics network in the major continental European markets.

Burkhard Eling, CEO at Dachser

over the decades is a major advantage," Tonn says. "Our goal for the coming years is to continue growing, not only in Italy but throughout Europe." The foundation for this will be reliable, uniform quality standards. "At Dachser, we're investing heavily in homogeneous IT systems and innovative digital solutions to make the flow of goods more efficient and to constantly optimize our processes," the Dachser COO says. Europe-wide standardized transport products from the entargo product family, with fixed transit times and quality standards, play a key role here. "Such a setup is possible only within a seamless network underpinned by uniform logistics processes, and delivers clear benefits for the customer," Tonn explains.

The joint venture places a particular focus on the Domino transport management system, which has been developed and refined over several decades and is to be rolled out across Italy over the next five years. There are also other digital services, such as the eLogistics online portal for managing logistics tasks. In the future, DACHSER platform will be available as an integrated solution covering all carriers. "When it comes to system integration, we bring everyone involved to the table:

operations, sales, controlling, marketing, and HR," Tonn says. "A holistic approach is the only way we can grow together quickly at all levels."

Tonn emphasizes that system integration and the realignment of the company are always carried out with a full focus on the market and the customers. As Brillante explains, "We now have the opportunity to meet the full breadth of our customers' requirements and to develop innovative solutions for those who deliver from Italy to Europe, as well as for European customers who want to enter the Italian market. Our strength is that we can serve both the large industrial companies in the north and the smaller companies in the south." DACHSER & FERCAM Italia wants to shift Fercam's previous focus from many smaller spot customers with short-notice orders to groupage and palletized goods, which are suited to the freight structure in Dachser's European Logistics network. "This will enable us to offer these customers even better and more efficient services, particularly in contract logistics." The joint venture has 17 warehouses throughout Italy with a total of 310,000 pallet spaces.

The logistics market in Italy

In a recent study on Italian freight transport, market researchers from Upply found that the Italian road freight market is developing at an above-average rate compared to the rest of Europe, despite glaring infrastructure deficiencies. In 2022, year-over-year growth was 6.1 percent, meaning the market exceeded 1 billion metric tons, a level that hadn't been reached since 2013. The Italian market is now in fifth place with 1.047 billion metric tons (bn t). It ranks third in Europe, behind Germany (3.061 bn t), France (1.631 bn t), Poland (1.600 bn t), and Spain (1.588 bn t). According to an estimate by Mordor Intelligence, Italy's road freight market will be worth USD 38.40 billion in 2024 and is set to rise to USD 47.38 billion by 2030.

(Source: <https://bit.ly/freight-transport-italy>)

Employees make the difference

Tonn and Brillante say that a decisive factor in the successful integration was the close collaboration and mutual trust between Dachser and Fercam employees. This is clearly noticeable in day-to-day business. Comerlati agrees: "The corporate cultures of our two family-owned companies are a perfect match. We don't sell products; we offer services that are provided by people."

Until now, the Dachser brand wasn't very well known in Italy, except in food logistics, where Dachser has been active with its own country organization since 2010. "But with experienced management, committed employees, and reliable performance, we'll quickly make a name for ourselves with DACHSER & FERCAM Italia," Comerlati says. This will be supported by the successive rebranding of vehicles and branches in Dachser yellow and blue, which has already begun. "Soon we'll be an unmistakable presence in Italy, too—as a strong Dachser brand."

Bernardo has now arrived with his truck at the top of the Brenner Pass. Before heading down into Austria's Wipp Valley, he stops off at the Brennersee rest area to take his mandatory break. A good time for an espresso. "Un caffè," the driver says at the bar. "But tipicamente italiano, please: plenty of crema, nice and strong, and a little sweet."

M. Schick