Launch of world’s first “Apple Ropeway”

LEITNER and Melinda implement historic project in northern Italy, saving 5,000 truck trips on the road

On November 18th, a milestone for sustainable logistics was achieved in the Italian province of Trento: the world’s first ropeway for transporting apples officially started operation. The ceremonial opening attracted a great deal of media attention and was attended by high-profile guests, including the Prime Minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, Agriculture Minister, Francesco Lollobrigida, as well as the top management of Melinda, represented by President Ernesto Seppi and Anton Seeber and Martin Leitner from LEITNER.

The Melinda consortium, which produces 400,000 tons of apples per year, chose LEITNER to build the world’s first ropeway system for transporting fruit, in Predaia in the Non Valley. In terms of technology, it is a detachable monocable uni-directional ropeway with 11 towers (six of which are in a tunnel), covering a distance of 1,300 meters and an altitude difference of 87 meters. The system can transport 460 stackable, 300-kilogram storage bins per hour, at a speed of five meters per second.

The route starts at the processing plant in Predaia and travels for roughly a third of the distance through a tunnel, which was originally built for mining dolomite rock, to the hypogeal cells. These temperature-controlled “natural refrigerators” in the heart of the Dolomites, use 30% less electricity than a conventional warehouse and avoid the necessity to construct new buildings on the surface.

The cabins are equipped with electric roller doors that open and close automatically when they reach the station, so the loading and unloading processes are fully automated and do not require manual assistance. Overall, the system only requires one employee to oversee its smooth operation and monitor the facility. A 26-meter-high freight elevator with a load capacity of 1,000 kg is also integrated into the ropeway end station; this elevator connects the two storage levels and has a fully automated loading and unloading system. The “Apple Ropeway” – partly financed by the European “Next Generation EU” program, which covered 40% of the investment – will save 5,000 truck trips and significantly reduce CO2 emissions in the valley.

During the grand opening ceremony, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni described the world's first apple ropeway as a pioneering project for sustainable transport:

"We are standing in front of a facility that was built entirely “made in Italy”, is powered by renewable energy, and is capable of transporting apples in a unique way. The underground storage rooms, which were dug into the heart of the Dolomite rock and form a huge ‘natural refrigerator’, make it possible to reduce energy costs, protect the environment, and avoid soil sealing. The underground hypogeal cells and the apple ropeway are an absolutely innovative production and organizational model."

Press contact:

LEITNER
Maurizio Todesco
Head of PR & Corporate Communications
Brennerstraße 34
I-39049 Sterzing (BZ)

Phone +39 0472 722115
Mobile +39 335 772229
maurizio.todesco@leitner.com

LEITNER
Maria Jäger
Marketing Communication
Michael-Seeber-Straße 1
6410 Telfs

Phone +43 (0)5262 621 21 3414
maria.jaeger@leitner.com