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**Agrilevante: "Off-site" at the BEL AGRI Biomethane Plant**

***Foreign businesspeople and journalists visited the model company located in the province of Foggia, which transforms agricultural waste into clean energy and is an excellent example of the circular economy.***

As part of Agrilevante 2025's collateral initiatives, ITABIA (Italian Biomass Association), in collaboration with FederUnacoma, organized a technical visit for foreign visitors and journalists to the Bel Agri biomethane plant located in the province of Foggia. The initiative provided a first-hand look at a virtuous circular bioeconomy model applied to the agricultural sector, where waste becomes a resource and contributes to the fight against climate change. The facility, built in 2022, is a concrete example of how technological innovation can enhance the byproducts of the Apulian agri-food sector. Every year, approximately 70,000 tons of materials that would otherwise pose a disposal problem are processed: mainly residues from olive milling (the so-called "pomace"), poultry manure (chicken droppings), and vegetable waste such as tomatoes, artichokes, and fennel. The facility's strategic location in Apulia - Italy's leading olive oil producing region—allows it to source supplies from within a 40-kilometer radius, with shipment peaks of up to 60 per day during the olive harvest season, from October to January. What makes this system particularly innovative is its total energy self-sufficiency. All the electrical and thermal energy required for operation is in fact self-produced using a portion of the biogas generated. The end result is the production of approximately 40 million cubic meters per year of what European legislation defines as “advanced biomethane,” fed directly into the natural gas grid. The quality of the biomethane produced is so high (99.9% methane) that it surpasses that of traditional natural gas, so much so that Snam (an Italian energy infrastructure company) uses it to improve the overall quality of the gas in the network. But the cycle doesn't end here because the digestate that remains at the end of the process – after being separated into solid and liquid fractions – returns to the agricultural fields as a natural fertilizer, helping to maintain soil fertility. The solid fraction, in particular, is also used for the construction of sports fields thanks to its high water-retaining capacity. The plant's environmental benefits are significant, as it prevents the consumption of over 3,800 tons of oil each year and the consequent emission of 11,500 tons of fossil-based CO₂ into the atmosphere. "This is a model that can be replicated in many other contexts," ITABIA officials pointed out during the visit, describing how the plant, which cost approximately EUR 10 million, represents the first of a series of similar projects planned in the area spanning Apulia, Campania, and Basilicata. The initiative is part of the broader Agrilevante program dedicated to bioenergy, with the exhibition area created by ITABIA for machinery and systems to handle agricultural biomass for energy purposes.

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