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From our correspondent

Green Georgia: the top in bio-energy

Marzia Longo

The State of Georgia boasts extraordinary natural conditions, the most advanced research and a policy of government incentives and support that have made it one of the world centers of excellence in terms of energy from biomass



Nature is very generous in Georgia, but it is not the only element in the region that boosts the development of bioenergy. Research and technology centers of excellence, together with a strong government support, make the ingredients that made it possible for this

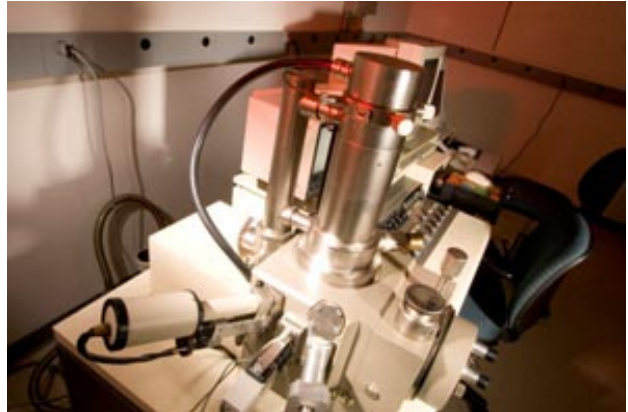
State of the South-East US to become a world leader in the field of renewable energy. We have been invited with group of journalists coming from all over the world to “see with our eyes” the state of the art in terms of production and use of renewable energy in Georgia.

With no doubt, the forests that cover more than 10 million hectares of the territory, a climate that favors their quick growth and the numerous plantations of other several energy convertible materials represent a huge stock of biomass in itself. However, the State of Georgia goes much beyond the simple exploitation of its generous natural potentialities. The companies operating in the bioenergy market are strongly supported by the government with tax incentives, the release of simplified permits for the opening of new plants, the offer of direct collaboration with numerous research



institutes: in short, everything is finalized to develop the right technologies and optimize the products. And all of this – it may sound very strange to us – is a network of opportunities completely activated by the government.

Among the many realities we had a chance to visit, I've been particularly impressed by the Centre of Innovation for Energy (COI-Energy), a government institution that was born and designed to promote the use and development of renewable energy in Georgia. According to this mission, COI-Energy helps for free new companies operating in the bioenergy sector, first of all in their start-up, starting from the



search for the most suitable lands, providing consultancy to find the most favorable incentives and bank loans the market can offer, creating links with networks of potential investors and taking care of the necessary procedures to get any kind of authorization and permit. This kind of assistance allows companies to save from 6 to 12 months in the creation of a new plant. Partner of the Georgian University Network, COI-Energy can provide final clients with direct access to the know-how of research institutes that boast excellence in the renewable energy sectors, especially in the experimentation of new technologies, mechanical systems and infrastructures that lead to the optimization of the work.

Then, there are other government research institutions - such as Quick Start, which follows the process of human resources training and take care of all the needs of the start-up phase - and private nonprofit ones - such as the Herty Advanced Development Center, which cooperates in the choice and experimentation of all the phases within the energy chain. These numerous facilitations, added to the favorable natural and climatic potentials, encourage many foreign companies to locate new plants for the exploitation and production of renewable energy in Georgia.

From the factory producing high efficiency and low cost photovoltaic cells of Suniva, to the plant of the Portuguese EFACEC – first in the US in the electronic market in terms of electric distribution networks, which will soon substitute all those of the North American market following the new standards for the USA electric grid - the tour has been really comprehensive and interesting.



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Finally, the unquestioned protagonist of this tour has been the biomass, together with the potentialities related to its use. The forests covering most of the State, plus the specific cultivations for the creation of agroenergy – and in particular Miscanthus -, the super advanced researches in terms of optimization

of the production, the water save, the atomization and informatization of agriculture and the transformation in biogas, pellets or chips have made the State of Georgia a leader in biomass.

The American market, however, still finds it hard to come up with the right mindset to “spend more” for an energy that saves the environment, as in the US the cost of energy is still not as high as it is in Europe. For this reason, the State of Georgia invites, encourages and spurs also other countries, where the demand for clean energy is higher, to take advantage using, exploiting and importing the points of excellence of Georgia: because what we are talking about is really excellence.