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Hydrogen for clean fuel: Air Liquide starts up a new production unit in Italy

press release

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Air Liquide and Hydrogen

Air Liquide is **one of the world's largest hydrogen producers**. The Group's **hydrogen revenue** totaled **€830 million in 2006**, and is expected to grow to **€1 billion by 2008**.

** Hydro conversion consists of transforming, using hydrogen, long and unsaturated hydrocarbon molecules in shorter and saturated molecules which are more adapted to gasoline and diesel.*

Most hydrogen is used in **hydro conversion*** and in **fuel desulphurization** processes to produce **gasoline and diesel with lower sulphur content**. The hydrogen supplied by Air Liquide to refineries around the world enabled refineries to reduce **sulphur oxide (SOx) emissions** by approximately **700,000 tonnes** in 2006, which is more than the total SOx emitted by a country like France in one year.

Over the past six years, Air Liquide has made plans to build 16 new large hydrogen production units worldwide and the Group has recently started up operations at its new production unit in Priolo Gargallo, Italy. This new unit, located within Erg Med's refinery (ERG Group), has a capacity of 30,000 Nm³/hour and is scheduled to produce **over 220 million m³ of pure hydrogen annually**. It will supply hydrogen for the next **15 years** to two refineries in Italy's Augusta-Priolo petrochemicals district: **Erg Med's** refinery and **ExxonMobil's** (Esso Italiana's) refinery. The hydrogen will be used in the hydroconversion plant to reduce the amount of sulphur in the gasoline and diesel produced at these refineries. Air Liquide has invested approximately **€45 million** in this new unit.

Pierre Dufour, Executive Vice President in charge of the Large Industries World Business Line at Air Liquide, commented, "We are delighted to see this project come to fruition. Our hydrogen will allow our customers' processes to run more efficiently, and help them live up to their environmental responsibilities. It is a shining example of Air Liquide's commitment to sustainable development."

*With more than 38,000 employees in 72 countries, Air Liquide is a world leader in industrial and medical gases and related services. The Group offers **innovative solutions** based on constantly enhanced **technologies** and produces **air gases (oxygen, nitrogen, argon, rare gases...)** and **many other gases including hydrogen**. The Group contributes to the manufacturing of **many everyday products**: bubbles in sparkling beverages, protective atmosphere for packed foods, oxygen for hospitals and homecare patients, ultra-pure gases for the semiconductor industry, hydrogen to desulfurize fuels...*

*Air Liquide is committed to **sustainable development** and helps to **protect life**. Founded in 1902, Air Liquide has successfully developed a long-term relationship with its shareholders built on **trust** and **transparency** and guided by the principles of **corporate governance**. Since the publication of its first consolidated financial statements in 1971, Air Liquide has posted **strong and steady earnings growth**. Sales in 2006 totaled **10,949 million euros**, with sales outside France accounting for almost 80%. Air Liquide is listed on the Paris stock exchange and is a component of the CAC 40 and Eurostoxx 50 indices (ISIN code FR 0000120073).*