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- > [RFID News](#)
- > [Opinion](#)
- > [Expert Views](#)
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- > [RFID Buyer's Guide](#)
- > [RFID Webinars](#)
- > [RFID Journal Blog](#)
- > [GET STARTED](#)
- > [RFID FAQs](#)
- > [Glossary of Terms](#)

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RFID Journal Blog

Where the RFID Community Shares Ideas

RFID TAKES ROOT IN ITALY

By Mark Roberti

I got an e-mail a few months back from Antonio Rizzi, a professor of industrial logistics and supply-chain management in the department of industrial engineering at the **University of Parma**. In conjunction with **AIM Italia**, Rizzi invited me to speak at a logistics and material-handling conference and exhibition in Bologna. I really didn't want to go because it was just one week after **RFID Journal LIVE! 2007**, and I thought I'd be exhausted. I am, but I'm glad I took him up on the offer after all.

Rizzi is the head of the **RFID Lab** at the University of Parma. Set up to do applied research that would help end-user companies take advantage of RFID technology, the lab is working with some major companies in Italy, including Auchan, Barilla, Coop, Danone, Lavazza, Nestlé, Parmalat and Unilever. It has also spun out a startup called **ID-Solutions**.

Most of the companies are working on internal applications, Rizzi says, such as asset tracking. "Many of them had not heard of the Electronic Product Code when they come to us," he told me. "We have been educating companies about EPC and the benefits of tracking goods in the supply chain."

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« MAY 2007 »						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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The conference track on RFID lasted a full morning and was attended by 80 people or so. I spoke about the current state of RFID adoption globally. Massimo Bertolini, a researcher at the University of Parma, presented the results of some tag and reader testing done by the RFID Lab. Andrea Volpi, chief operating officer of ID-Solutions, did a presentation on the RFID-automated warehouse project. The idea was to show how RFID can be deployed in different aspects of warehouse operations, to reduce labor costs and automate tasks.



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has been involved in from the beginning. Marco Caranda of **Psion Teklogix** described a major deployment by Saudi Post. Oscar Gridavilla of **Oracle Italy** did a presentation on the value of a software-oriented architecture for collecting and using RFID and other data. And Marialuisa Martinengo of **SAP Italia** did a presentation on the adaptive enterprise. It was an informative half-day track.

Professor Rizzi moved all the equipment in his RFID Lab to the exhibit hall for a demonstration. He has a high-speed conveyor with the ability to sort cases, a conveyor that moves a tagged pallet back and forth through the read zone at a constant speed to test tags, an RFID-enabled pallet shrink-wrap machine and an RFID-enabled pallet jack.

What impressed me was the number of people coming through the exhibit hall to see demonstrations of how RFID can be used to sort products on a conveyor, and how many sat through presentations by AIM and its partners in a theater set up in the exhibit hall. Clearly, there is a lot of interest in RFID in Italy.

Professor Rizzi and his team deserve a lot of credit. They are focusing their research on solving real business problems, and they have gained the trust and support of the RFID community and the Italian government (Rizzi has been active in trying to get the Italian government to change the UHF spectrum allocation so that UHF systems can be used in Italy). The lab at the University of Parma is also a founding member of the **Global RF Lab Alliance** (see story **Eight RFID Labs Form Global RF Lab Alliance**).

For me, it was great to see all the activity going on and some of the research being done in Italy. I'm convinced that such projects and research will bear fruit for companies and help drive RFID adoption.

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