

Entrepreneur of the Year 2008 – Ernst&Young award: NICCOLO' BRANCA IS ONE OF THE THREE WINNERS OF THE "GLOBAL" CATEGORY

Milan, 20 November 2008 – Niccolò Branca, Chairman and CEO of Branca International S.p.A., the Italian holding wholly owned by the Branca family that controls the industrial activities of the spirits and real estate sector, is one of the three winners of the "Global category" of the 2008 Ernst&Young award for having introduced major development policies at the international level and specifically "For having built in 1845 a brand known for its quality among consumers in over 160 countries worldwide".

Niccolò Branca, who has headed the family business since 1999, stood out for his successful entrepreneurial activity and the passion shown to launch Fratelli Branca Distillerie S.r.l. (Italy) and F.lli Branca Destilerias S.A. (Argentina) towards a more stable and significant positioning on international markets. Branca International S.p.A., with a turnover of 149 million € in 2007 and 200 employees, is today a well-established Italian family business known all over the world.

Niccolò Branca has been rewarded for his entrepreneurial skills and the ability to introduce innovation and competition into a family business that has been present in the spirits sector since 1845. He headed a series of initiatives, from the innovation of the product portfolio to the redesign of the company organization, from the recruitment of qualified and experienced managers to the creation of an exclusively export-oriented team, from development plans for strategic markets such as Argentina, South America and China to a modern policy to manage real estate and idle production plants. All these initiatives, supported by R&D investments that account for almost 3% of the consolidated turnover and a constant attention to the quality of products, raw materials imported from 4 continents and the whole chain of production, have allowed Distillerie Branca to achieve important targets: the presence in more than 160 countries worldwide, over 50% of the turnover (more than 70% in volume) generated by exports and brands appreciated all over the world for their quality and the selected natural products.

Branca International S.p.A. is the only company of the beverage and spirits sector that was selected among the several nominees for the 2008 Ernst & Young award.

Niccolò Branca, who was previously Manager of the Sales and Communication Department of Fratelli Branca Distillerie, was one of the founders and also Chairman of a finance company from 1990 to 1998 that later became Banca Ifigest S.p.A. and Director of the series "Saggezza, Scienza e Tecnica", Nardini publishing. He is now Chairman and CEO of Branca International S.p.A., the holding of the group, Chairman of Fratelli Branca Distillerie S.r.l. and Fratelli Branca Destilerias S.A..

The industrial activity of the Branca group began in 1845 when Bernardino Branca invented Fernet Branca, the bitter liqueur that would have become famous all over the world.

In 1982 the group took over 50% of the "Carpano" brand, that would have been later bought up in 2001. More brand acquisitions took place in the years to follow: "Villa Branca" in 1985, "Candolini" in 1987 and "Caffè Borghetti" in 2001. The two production plants stand in Italy and Argentina. Branca International S.p.A., the holding of the group, was established in 2000 and entered the real estate sector in Italy and abroad, thus controlling Branca Real Estate S.r.l.; in that same year Niccolò Branca inaugurated the plant of Tortuguitas in Buenos Aires. In 2005 Branca International S.p.A. launched a policy to redesign the company organization by reconverting idle production plants, by separating production and commercial activities into different companies from real estate and by diversifying the investments of the group.

The successful entrepreneurial activity and the managerial contribution of Niccolò Branca in Argentina led the Universidad del Salvador in Buenos Aires to appoint him as full professor (June 2007).

"I am so glad I am one of the three winners of the "Global" category who have stood out for having successfully headed Italian companies at the international level. This is an increasingly important award for a medium-sized family business that competes worldwide with large multinationals. I wish to share this result with the members of the Branca family, the whole management group and Italian and Argentine colleagues who have supported me to achieve really ambitious targets. The steady growth abroad, the constant development of new markets through agreements, commercial and marketing initiatives aiming at enhancing those characteristics of our product portfolio that best suit local consumption and trends, the compliance with ecologically sustainable rules and behaviours worldwide would have not been achieved if all 200 Branca employees had not acted as precious and often enthusiast partners and collaborators", stated Niccolò Branca at the award ceremony for Entrepreneur of the Year 2008 by Ernst&Young. "To some extent, Branca is still an artisanal firm whose success bases on its historical skills, as it can innovate while protecting values and traditions. Quality, sustainable development and attention to consumers are only some of the features that allow us to characterize our products and our relationship with Italian and foreign clients".