Therefore, in order to be competitive, a cement plant has to run at full production. For technical and economical reasons, the building of very little cement plants is not recommended, and has been established that the minimum optimal scale of a cement plant is 1 million tonne/year of cement, it follows that the total production has to be sold at a price lower than the plant's production cost, i.e. within a 150-200 Km (0.9-1.25 miles) radius.

If this limit is possibly, another option to reach full production is to sell on foreign markets by sea freight, which is practicable only if the cement plant is located close to a harbor facility, because the additional costs required to convey the cement from the plant into the ship and export into a non-profitable solution.

For that reason, the export solution can be taken into consideration if the plant-ship distance does not exceed 10-15 Km (6-9 miles). Greek producers, for example, have been practicing this solution since the very first installation of their production facilities in fact, almost all the Greek plants are close to the sea, so much so that today Greece is a strong and aggressive international competitor, selling 50% of its total production capability on the foreign market.

In Italy, the cement plants, which were built merely to meet the high domestic demand, are not located according to this concept, therefore Italy has low possibilities of exporting cement. In the Buzzi Unicem group, Augusta and Barletta are export-oriented. Augusta is the best located plant, since it is directly linked by a conveyor belt to a dock, which allows the loading of large ships (up to 20.000 tons) and is equipped with modern loading facilities (see Portland N. 20, June 2000).

Augusta and Barletta: export oriented

Augusta, la nuova linea di cottura del clinker inaugurata nel '94

L'idea è quella di accumulare cemento nei quattro siti quotidianamente, senza distogliere molte autobottiche adibite al servizio del mercato nazionale. Avendo i siti di produzione che si trovano a circa 150 -200 Km di distanza, i trasporti giornalieri di cemento verso i quattro siti di stoccaggio sono assolutamente necessari, sia per soddisfare la domanda nazionale, sia per soddisfare una parte delle esportazioni.