

# Theme | 2010

Seizing opportunities in a sustainable setting



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# 'Beet growing is really important to us'



"Most of my contacts are with Suiker Unie of course. They're very helpful. You never hear them complain. The staff are proud of their business. That feels good and gives you confidence." Chris-Thijs Staats (29) farms in a partnership with his parents on peat land in the province of Drenthe. As a member of the Youth Council he is involved in the decisions and choices taken within the beet growers' cooperative. His future as an arable farmer is closely tied to that of the cooperative. "That's why I hope Cosun will remain a reliable partner and continue to look after the interests of its members/beet growers. For us, growing beet is very important as a relatively stable factor. I hope I can grow beet for many years to come. And that Cosun keeps paying a good price for them," he laughs. "I think Cosun has really proven itself as a processor that operates close to the primary sector. There's still a lot that can be done, especially if you look at the development of the green economy. Biogas production is a wonderful example of the gains that can be made in this area. Yes, I'm really looking forward to the future."

# Suiker Unie is getting more and more out of sugar beet



“Our first thoughts are for the sugar of course. That’s what’s worth the most. But what remains of the beet is also valuable,” says R&D director Frank van Noord. “Fibres are put to good use as animal feed and the filtrate is returned to the land as calcium fertiliser. The soil attaching to the beet and the purified process water are also re-used.”

Sugar beet are a source of profit in every respect, not only for the return earned by Suiker Unie but also for the environment and society. Van Noord: “To give you one example, sometimes we sell the pulp as animal feed but at other times it’s more interesting to turn it into biodegradable packaging materials or ferment the pulp into biogas. The decision is always based on economic and ecological considerations.”

Suiker Unie looks beyond the confines of its own business. “We are developing a business park around the site in Dinteloord. Greenhouses will be built near the site that will use our purified process water, green gas, residual heat and CO<sub>2</sub>. In turn we will buy their plant remains as a raw material for the biofermenter. The process of making better use of the beet is being applied on a wider scale.”

# Thanks to TPM, training, work and quality go hand in hand



“Although I haven’t been here long, I understand all the ins and outs of my work. I feel confident about what I’m doing and play a full part in the team as though I’ve been here for years.” The new operator in the specialities factory in Puttershoek feels completely at home. TPM has significantly cut his induction period. Birgitte van Steen, P&O team leader and responsible for the TPM Training and Development Pillar: “Since we started using TPM we can train everyone into independent operators relatively quickly. Furthermore, the staff can identify problems more quickly and solve them themselves. This approach is reducing losses.”

“How do we do it? We first ‘cut up’ the production and packaging line into discrete processes that we meticulously map out in the form of short instructions using drawings and teaching materials. Everyone can then see how the line works and where improvements can be made. We include the new insights in the instruction manual for operators and engineers. They refine them and add to them so that the training courses are even shorter.”

Using this approach, new colleagues quickly learn how to work independently. “What’s more, they’re proud of their work,” says van Steen. “And that’s reflected in their output. We’ve seen it jump by no less than 20%.”

# One method for all Cosun businesses



Cosun's ambition is to have its businesses rank among the most energy efficient in the industry. To save energy and make optimal use of it, all locations are working with the same approach. The wheel only has to be invented and rolled out once. Cosun Food Technology Centre has developed a method that the businesses can use in their pursuit of savings. Bert Huisman, Process and Sugar Technology manager at Cosun Food Technology Centre: "The businesses often have so much to do that they never get round to drawing up cost-cutting plans. With our method, they can do so in double quick time. A secondary advantage is that we can make better use of all the know-how and experience available within the group and turn it to our benefit."

After just one day's consultation between the responsible managers and CFTC's energy specialist, for example, the Aviko site in Cuijk identified dozens of savings opportunities in 2010. Huisman: "With surprising benefits. Fresh potato products, for instance, have to be sterilised in their packaging. While a pallet is waiting its turn for the machine, it is preheated using surplus warm water. Less steam – energy – is then needed for the sterilisation. There is also a saving on the time needed to heat the products."

# Fit employees have the future



"Fit people feel better and are sick less often. Everyone benefits," explains Jan van Brandenburg, deputy HRM director at the Aviko Group. "We cut sick leave and our people feel better. They will also increase the likelihood of being healthy when they retire. We think that's very important, especially now that the retirement age is being increased and people are having to work longer. We want them to be fit when they retire so that they enjoy many more years of good health."

About half of Aviko's staff will be older than 50 in 2012. The aging workforce has prompted the management to introduce an age-aware personnel policy. "The decline in long-term sick leave can already be seen," says van Brandenburg. "But it's still too early to say that the benefits are permanent. Some people revert to their old habits after half a year's coaching. So we've agreed that the in-house doctor will examine the participants twice a year. This will stop them dropping out and enable us to take corrective actions if necessary. And we've got a far better picture of how healthy the employees are. We are trying to excite as many people as possible about our programme by publishing something about our activities every month."