

# FROM INTERN TO CEO IN 25 YEARS

AN INTERVIEW WITH ARJAN KUNST BY AMBER OUSSOREN

From intern to CEO in 25 years, Arjan Kunst is the CEO of the international company Seed Processing Holland. Founding as a small steel construction company, Seed Processing Holland is now a world leader in seed processing equipment and solutions (as their slogan states). I recently had the pleasure of interviewing this humble CEO. A man who is prone to say, 'I only started as a mechanical engineer'.

## What has kept you working at SPH for over 30 years?

"It's not finished," Arjan says smirking. "As long as it feels like a hobby and we can bring SPH further, I will be here". Arjan Kunst has worked at SPH for almost three decades. Still studying mechanical engineering, he started as an intern in the engineering department for a small steel construction company back in these days van Dok & de Boer. The business produced modest steel constructions and different kinds of small machines for different industries. "Nowadays we manufacture large seed processing installations like this" pointing proudly to the impressive sketch hanging on the wall.

## What challenges does SPH face?

SPH is a well-established company but is still eager to develop. These challenges are what drives this CEO. "It's a matter of having the right seed processing equipment/solutions for our customers and having competent people in the right positions to make this possible". Having an average of 9-year employment length, employees are hired to be here long-term. They maintain the accessible atmosphere originating from a family company, new employees rave about feeling welcomed into this establishment. But even a friendly culture like this houses its challenges. At SPH employees are challenged to be proactive and versatile. "We strive to have every department involved in achieving the best customer experience".

## How would you describe SPH's sales strategy?

"We pride ourselves on selling quality and durable products". The company is feeling nowadays the pressure of competition motivating them to act more strategic and structured. By hiring experienced assets, investing in research and customer care SPH remains a fierce competitor. The company is unique for being able to sell a wide range of seed processing equipment in every seed production process. The CEO will always say this with pride, but also realizing SPH therefore encounters a varied range of competitors. SPH faces competitors in every process, also competitors specialized in just one seed production process. "The competition keeps us on our toes."

## What does the future have in store for SPH ?

Trends such as vegetarians and vegans ensure the market keeps growing. The firm is growing agreeably along the market and is expected to have a bright future. Nevertheless, just as most companies SPH is feeling effects from COVID-19. "Normally we work overtime from July through December, this wasn't the case the previous year. We are happy to still have every employee on board and are eager to invest". Additionally, COVID-19 forces them to be more independent in many aspects of the business. SPH is working with partners around the globe to be closer to their customers for sales and service activities. Realizing more and more large projects in the vegetable and field crop seed industries to be able to continue to improve seed quality, production processes and working environment for their customers. "As long as I also get to work on large quotations, we will continue to do great things" pointing at his desk. Seed Processing Holland will continue to invest in the development of new seed processing equipment.

Seed Processing Holland has many aspirations for the future and Arjan will continue to experience them (with as much patience as he is capable of). "An outstanding company in a fascinating market"