

Rhapsody in blue – and salmon pink

When someone in the US eats Norwegian smoked salmon from Lerøy, there's a good chance it was produced here, at Lerøy Seafood Centre in the Dutch town of Urk.

A sea of blue This is the overwhelming impression on entering the premises of Lerøy Seafood Center in the Dutch fishing town of Urk. Everything is blue: the massive ventilation pipes in the ceiling, the conveyor belt, the robust concrete floor – even the employees' workwear. And the main product, the pinky-orange salmon that is the basis for most of what happens here, really stands out against all that blue.

During 2019, just over 3000 tonnes of fish in the form of smoked salmon slices left the factory for destinations all over the world. Or as prepacked fresh fish for grocery stores in the local area. 2019 was the first full year of production for the factory, which opened in 2018, the fifth Lerøy factory in the Netherlands.

Engaged manager

"We have the potential to increase production much more. This year, we expect to produce between 4000 and 5000 tonnes, but in the long term we could produce 15,000 tonnes a year here,

"If you close your eyes, you can smell that we smoke fish here. But otherwise the air is really fresh, thanks to a state-of-the art ventilation system," emphasises CEO Tjeerd Hoekstra.

doubling production in the Netherlands," says Tjeerd Hoekstra, CEO of Rodé Vis, the subsidiary that runs the Dutch factories. He's been with Rodé Vis for over 25 years and, in the same way as Norwegians are born with skis on their feet, people from Urk are born with fish scales. Hoekstra is no exception:

"The passion for fish and fish production has always been there, and both my father and grandfather worked in the industry. I started on the factory floor and I know the entire production process

well, so the factory workers and I speak the same language. And I recognise the quality of the products when I'm on the factory floor – I don't need to ask," he points out. He talks us through his working day as an engaged CEO:

"I usually wake before the alarm goes off at 04.45. I'm at work by 05.30 to attend the morning production meeting, where I have chance to ask all manner of questions. I also try to take a walk through all our factories several times a week, so that I can talk to colleagues in production. I think this helps to create a sense of pride and engagement.

Proud employees

And the employees corroborate this. As part of its work to create a shared corporate culture for all its facilities in Norway and abroad, Lerøy questioned employees around Europe about the Group's values and their evaluation of the company as a whole.

Employees in Urk particularly emphasised the fact that the management seem to be genuinely interested in the employees' wellbeing.

One of the employees wrote: "Lerøy is a proud and stable employer", while another highlighted that "the management is in close contact with us employees, and we feel well looked after." At the same time, Hoekstra points out all the internal opportunities available to employees by virtue of working for a big company.

Built for the future

Not only is the business in the Netherlands large with its five factories, the new factory is also much larger than the current production volume requires: "Lerøy Seafood Center has been built for the future," emphasises Ivar Wulff, COO Sales and Distribution, from Lerøy's head office in Bergen. He explains that the new factory is streamlined for optimally efficient production of smoked fish on the one side and prepacked fresh seafood on the other, quite literally.

"Yes, the premises are large with plenty of open space so we can easily change the production line and configuration. This is an investment in the future – it's as simple as that."



Around 70 employees work in two shifts at the new Lerøy Seafood Center in Urk.