

**HOUTVEZELS**  
**KLEIN**  
**KROMHOF**

**JEKRO**  
**HOUTPELLETS**

**KLEIN**  
**KROMHOF**  
**GREEN ENERGY**



**From sweeping wood shavings to world leading manufacturer**



From sweeping wood shavings  
to world leading manufacturer



Bedrijfsboek.nl

## AN OVERVIEW OF KLEIN KROMHOF - 1975



## Contents

Sweeping the shavings	68
Getting into business	72
Becoming serious contenders	84
Truck Collection from the old days	90
Where there's smoke...	94
Truck collection - some images	98
A new generation presents itself	100
Business going global	108
The motorist - Cerial in action	114
World-class quality and innovation	118
Who gets the job done?	122



# 1

## SWEEPING THE SHAVINGS

Gerhard Klein Kromhof was still young when, having worked many years in his employment, he realised he no longer found fulfilment in his work. His ambitions lay elsewhere: he much preferred self-employment and independence.

At the time Gerhard's father was the owner of a poultry farm that used wood shavings on the barn floors to collect the manure. The wood shavings were collected from a wood company in Vroomshoop, where the bags of shavings often had to be filled, tied up and transported home by hand - with help from Gerhard's brother Dick.

When the company contacted the brothers to request more frequent collections, he realised that the volume of product would be more than their business required and he formed the idea to contact third parties in order to sell on the excess wood shavings. When this proved successful Gerhard decided to expand on this and began to earn a living. He purchased

a tractor, a cart and a shovel and set out to collect wood shavings and sawdust from all of the surrounding wood processing companies.

The start-up didn't prove easy. It takes tremendous effort and nerve for a young man of 20 to personally approach companies in an attempt to sell his services - whilst simultaneously, 70's-80's era Netherlands was experiencing a heavy economic recession, with the interest rate at an all-time high.



Tractor and cart

The men of the early days.



Slowly but steadily, Gerhard gained the trust of his customers. When possible – they completed their collections during the unsociable hours of the night, and on Saturdays to accommodate their regular work schedules at their father’s poultry farm.

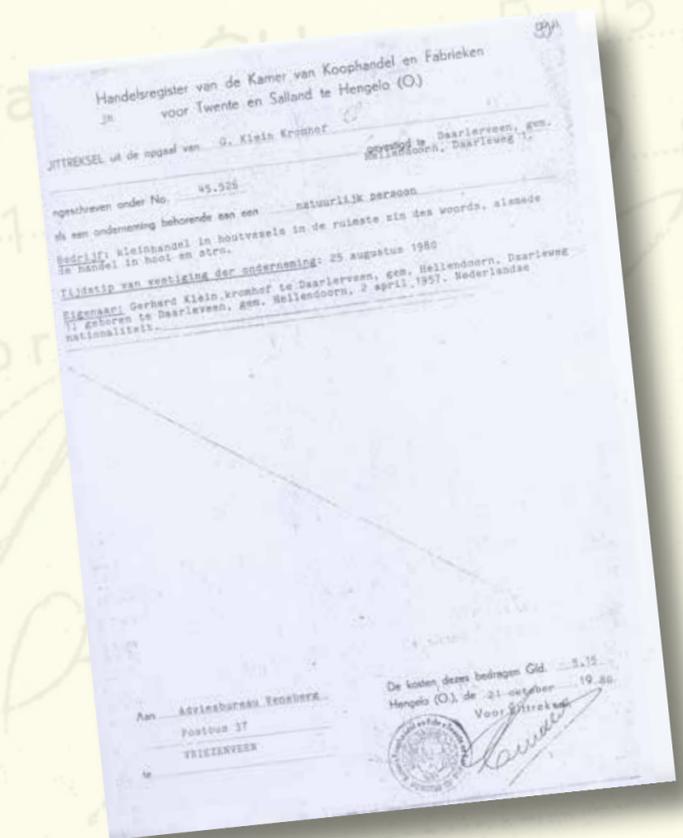
Finally, the move to complete independency and self-employment neared. After contemplating with Henny, his fiancé, they decided that if this was really his goal in life, then they would realise this dream together. At this very moment their motto was born: “Only buy what you can afford and leave banks outside the door”. They have always striven to stick to this goal. The decision to start a company had immediate personal consequences...



The couple’s desire to build a company residence in the local area had to be placed on the back burner. The priority was investing in their newly created business, and the company’s first truck was soon bought. Gerhard was permitted to use his father’s barn as his base of operations, and a spare bedroom was swiftly utilised as Henny’s office where she handled the firm’s business administration.



The company was officially registered with the Chamber of Commerce on the 25th of August 1980. The turnover for the first year was 10,191 Dutch Guilders.





## GETTING INTO BUSINESS

Two years later the situation was as follows: Gerhard and Henny were now a happily married couple and were living in a property close to their business. The couple had invested their complete savings into both the house and the business, but they were determined to not let this bring them down. The office was still at home, which made communication with the business pleasant and direct. This proved to be even more ideal when it enabled Henny to effectively multitask the company's administration and her duties as a mother, managing both their growing workload and their growing family.



By now the business growth was slow but steady. By providing excellent service, honouring agreements and delivering a high quality product, Klein Kromhof's reputation with both their customer base and suppliers was constantly on the up.

At the start of the 80's Gerhard's father retired, which enabled the couple to take over the running of the former poultry producer's warehouses - which had been expanded over time, which greatly improved the working conditions.

Gerhard was handy and possessed great technical insight which enabled him to do a lot of the required work without the need for outside help. He invented a mobile vacuum system on a cart for the collection of wood shavings and sawdust, eliminating the need for labour intensive shoveling.





*“This roof brings back fond memories . The council of Hellendoorn was not happy at all with this contraption built between my father’s barns. This did not stop me and I finished this with my own two hands. In the following years we had many more confrontations with the council when it came to building permits, but it always worked out in the end. Relations like this are very important when building and expanding your business.”*

- Gerhard Klein Kromhof -

*“It’s nice to see the mopeds in the pictures, which are a family tradition. The pictures paint a nice image of our early days, plagued by trial and error. Success comes from getting your hands dirty and carrying on.”*

Founder and pioneer Gerhard Klein Kromhof (63):

*“Being special by remaining ordinary”*

”

Gerhard Klein Kromhof built the company from the ground up with his own two hands, starting in his father’s poultry farm where it all began with the wood shavings. Besides that, as a natural born workhorse he would tackle all sorts of things. Slowly something beautiful was starting to take form. “I was born at the address from where our family business currently operates. My father had a poultry farm and of course I helped out where I could. I learned by doing, and the urge to become self-employed was already growing. School was not for me. I attended the local Christian trade school at the time. The head teacher Mr. Hof has visited our house regularly to discuss my results that left a lot to be desired with my parents. It did not work out, I hated attending school. When I was 13 the straw finally broke the camel’s back. I didn’t bring my swimming trunks when attending school swimming lessons at our local outside pool De Zandstuve in Vroomshoop. ‘I have a bikini you could try’ the PE teacher remarked as he wanted to fling me into the pool. This did not end well for him. I was absolutely furious and gave him a push which resulted in him falling into the pool. That basically closed the book on going to school.”



*Tackling things and building relationships*

“I started employment at a young age, at a dairy company in Vriezenveen for example, my salary being 97 Dutch Guilders. I combined this with helping my father with the chicks at his company. I also started work at the van Aalten pottery at the Havenstraat in Vroomshoop. That meant starting work at 6:00 AM and continuing to work once I returned home.



I was catching chickens in the early hours of the morning, I had no spare time. I found support in my brother Dick who still helps out wherever he can today, besides his job at Soweco. Gerard, my uncle, has always been a big support until this day. It had been painstakingly hard work since 1977 (martel'n en knooi'n, local Dutch saying.) but slowly the business was developing. I collected the shavings myself from Priviko, Brima, De Groots' Houtbouw and Van der Kolk locally in Vroomshoop and other mills in the region. This was all manual labour at the start. I invested a lot in building relationships and steadily grew my customer base. I was willing to learn and received experts' advise regarding vacuum extraction and press methods."

#### *Not destined for a career in motocross*

"I simply had no time to pursue sports or other hobbies. I was always at work so it was time to do something about this. (d'r an met de lippe, Dutch local saying)

I was young when I bought a motor bike, which apparently is a Klein Kromhof family tradition. I knew my father would think I was too young for such a racing monster, but I was adamant to take a ride. I decided to secretly try my Maico in one of my father's chicken

barns in the early morning. I effectively lost control of the bike and violently burst through the barn. The chicks tried to fly off en masse and approximately 1,500 of them died. I can still picture the removal with a conveyer belt the following morning. My father was furious and wanted to destroy the bike with a large beam of wood. My lovely mother managed to calm him down a bit. The bike had to go and this was the abrupt end of my motocross career. Something I left for my sons to pick up."

#### *A stronger return of the fires*

"I will always have strong memories regarding the destructive fires that hit our business. Mixed feelings. The end of my life's work, but 'We will rebuild, always have' as well. The day before our 25th wedding anniversary I received a serious knee and leg injury in Oss when a motocross rider jumped over the fencing and collided with me. Visiting the hospital on my wedding anniversary and still having coffee and cake with my family. That was the moment fire trucks with blaring sirens drove by en route to our business. It felt as if I ended up being in the wrong movie. Luckily we managed to rebuild our business and make an even stronger comeback"

#### *We are in this together*

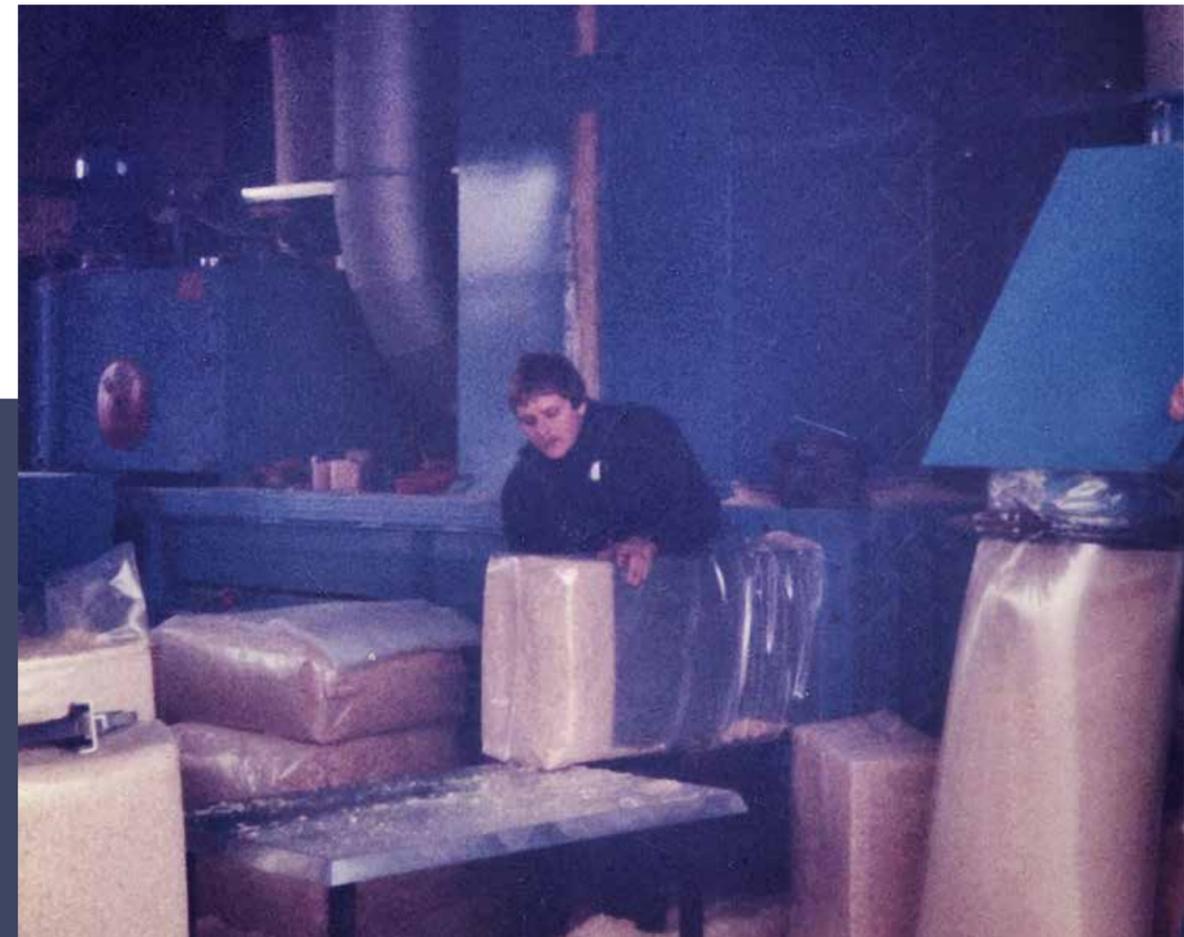
"I had a difficult time after my stroke in 2009, but with the support of my wife Henny and our four kids I pulled through. I did start to delegate more and more at this point and it is pleasant feeling that our 3 sons took to it so well. You can be special by staying ordinary as a business and this has been my motto both in business and personal life. It matters not who I have in front of me, it's always best to be yourself. My amazing wife Henny has been working in the business from the start, when we were still engaged. She has always done her part with the administration and book keeping. She has held the central position whilst also raising our children. It fills me with pride seeing how far our family business has come. But we remain humble. We are in this together, including our loyal and faithful staff members."



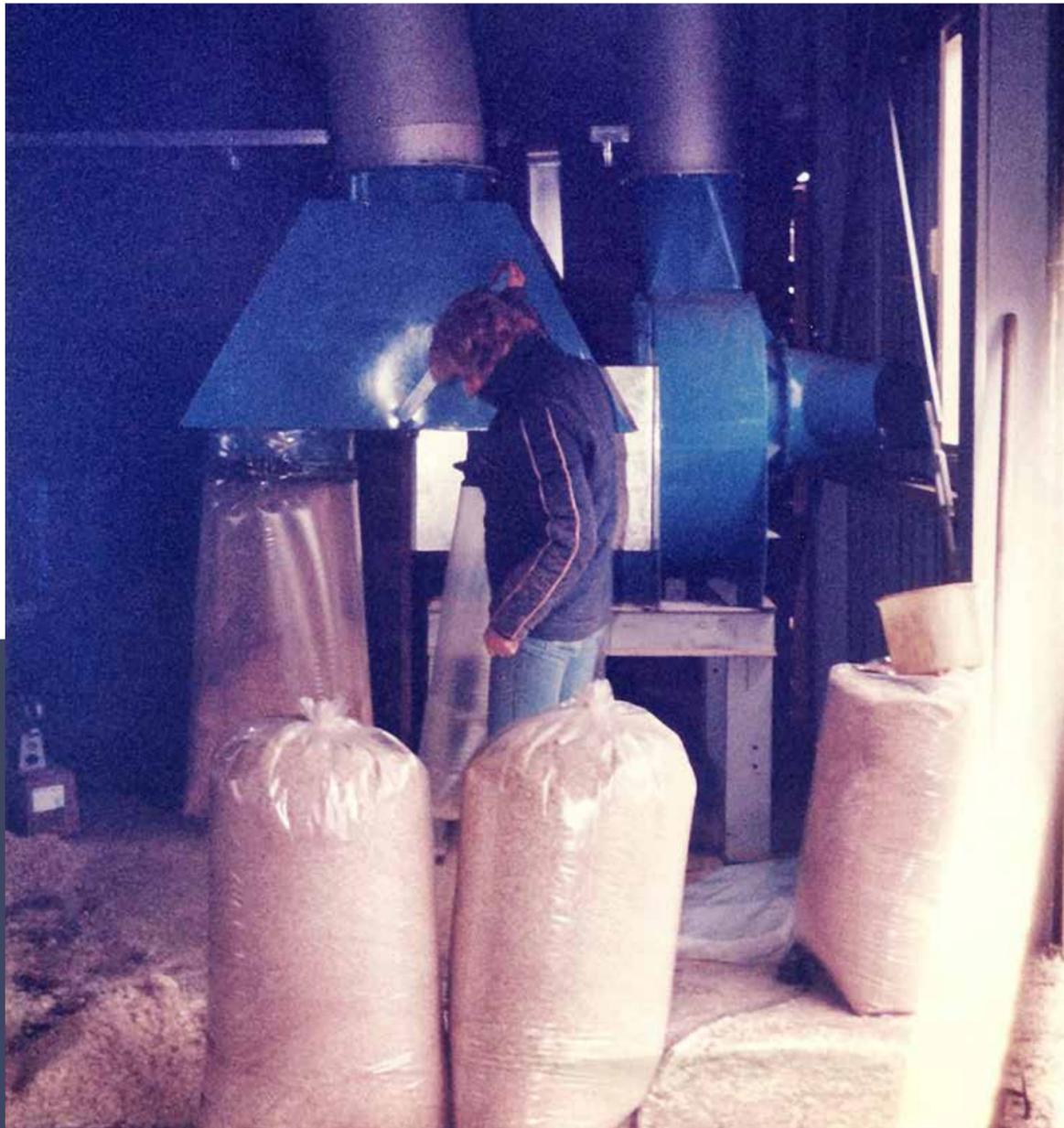
The materials still had to be processed at home by hand. Even for this - a solution was found: Gerhard convinced two men from Vriezenveen who pressed straw into bales, to start pressing the wood shavings.

The press placed in 1985 was the business' next logical investment after it had experienced sufficient growth. Besides the fibre press, a sieving system was installed to extract the sawdust from the wood shavings, which could then be packed and sold separately.

*February 1985, the building of a raised barn to facilitate the new fibre press.*



*5th of March 1985, the arrival of the fibre press ready to be installed.*



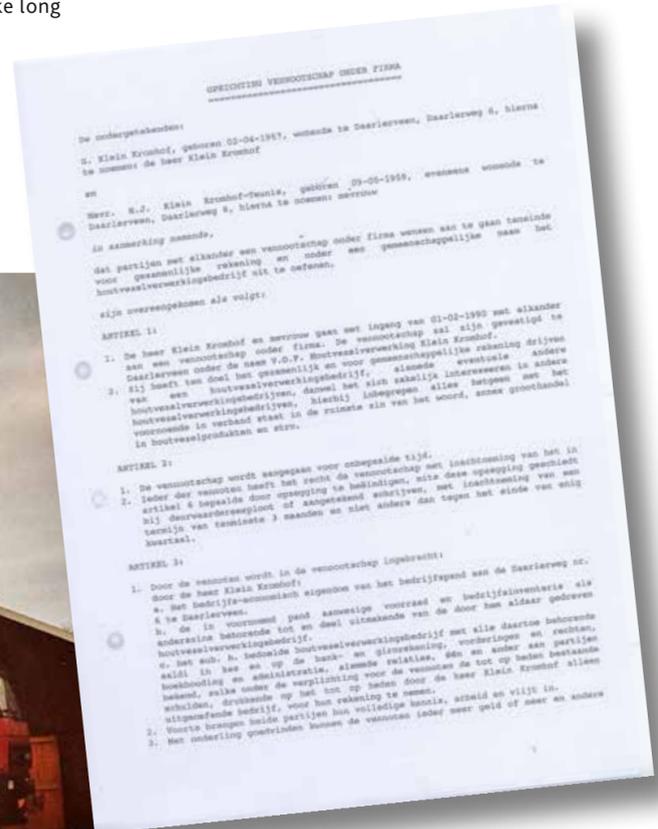




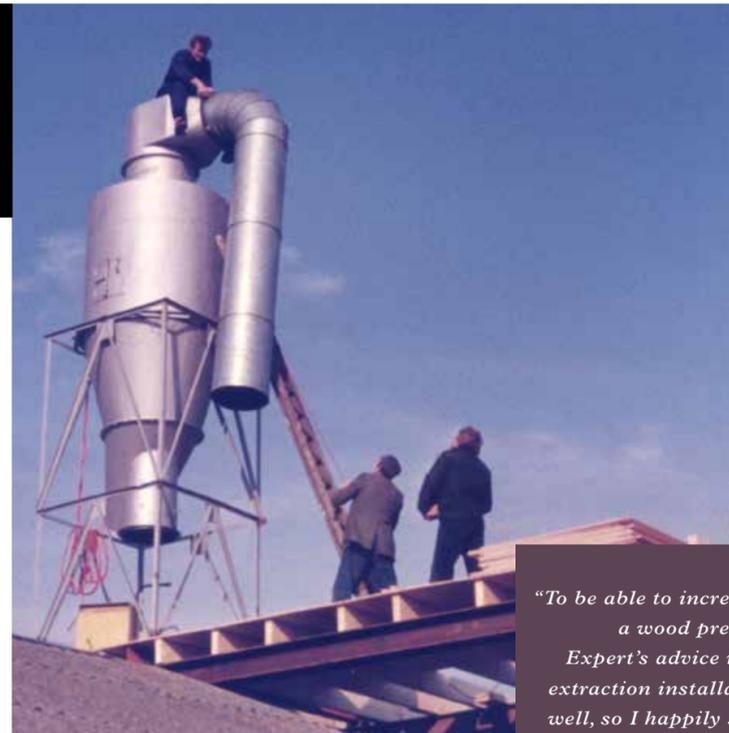
# 3

## BECOMING SERIOUS CONTENDERS

The Klein Kromhof business kept experiencing growth and developing as a bigger market player. In 1990 the decision was made to change to business into a general partnership. Those were the years of prosperity, and there was no end to lorries arriving to collect and deliver wood shavings. It was bustling with suppliers and customers. It didn't take long before the next step, the decision to change the company structure to a limited company was made, and the company was renamed to its now internationally renowned name: Klein Kromhof Houtvezels.



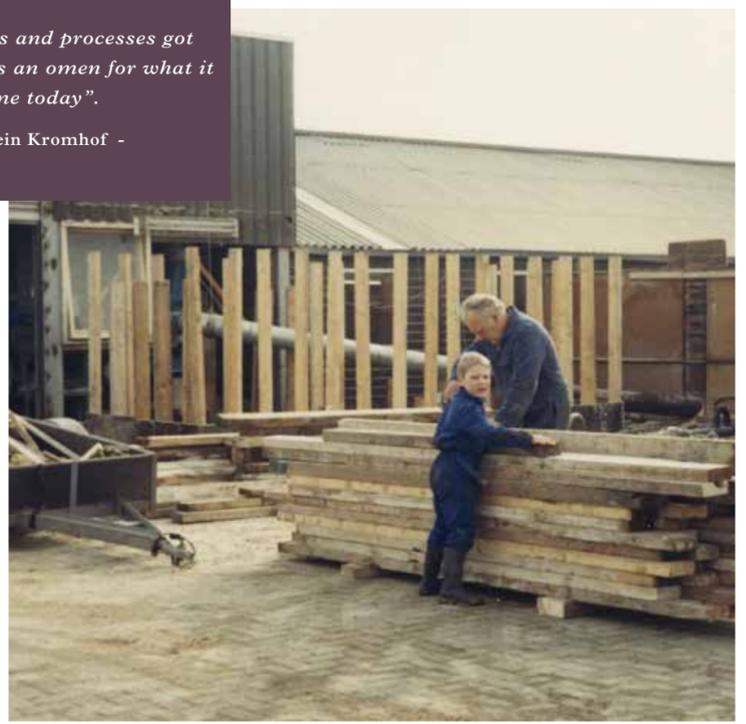
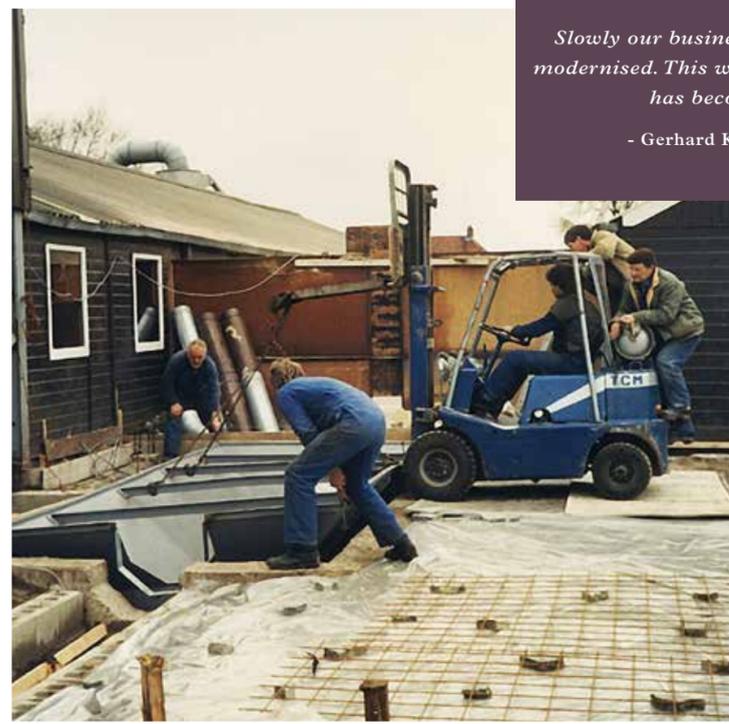
March 1986 Installation of the "Cycloon"



*"To be able to increase production in 1985 a wood press was needed. Expert's advice regarding a vacuum extraction installation worked out very well, so I happily sought this out again."*

*"Slowly our business and processes got modernised. This was an omen for what it has become today".*

- Gerhard Klein Kromhof -





Henny Klein Kromhof-Teunis:

*“A piece of the business  
always stays with you”*



” Henny Klein Kromhof-Teunis (61) hails from a transport company in Daarle and learned at a young age what working in a company entailed.

“I naturally found a place doing the book keeping during the early days of my relationship with Gerhard. Gerhard was always busy with the business and entrusted me with raising our children Hendri, Jeroen, Berinda and Cerie. A big task which made seeing the company grow next to the children even more beautiful.

In early 2000 it slowly became clear that combining work and raising the children had become too much. We decided together to find someone who could temporarily take over my duties in the business, so I could take my mind off it for a while. Things worked out differently, Robert, who took over, is still with us today. I’m grateful, that after a long period of absence, I could continue working in the business. This proved especially useful during Gerhard’s illness in 2006 and 2009. I could do what was necessary during these periods. Hendri and Jeroen - who were working with us in 2009 - were pushed as well during this period, but they handled things amazingly.

It is beautiful to see that our kids have worked or are still working in our family business, and have the same can-do attitude. We didn’t pressure them into it, this is just something that happened naturally. Berinda, our daughter, has had an enterprising spirit from a young age. The children got that from us. After having worked for 40 years at Klein Kromhof Houtvezels I still do the occasional odds and ends and I wouldn’t be me if I didn’t know the most important goings on of the business.”



In 2000 the opportunity came along to buy the bordering grasslands: perfect for growth and expansion. This meant building space and the creation of a marshalling yard. To give the area a more park-like look, ponds were dug.

Naturally the business wouldn't stop developing. More staff was hired and the process became more automated. A robot was introduced to replace heavy manual labour. Eventually the entire collecting, packing and stacking the shavings on pallets process became fully automated.



*April 1986, The expansion of the brick road.*

*June 1990, Placement of the refurbished construction shack on the newly created road.*





4

# TRUCK COLLECTION

# FROM THE OLD DAYS





Two future board members are already lending a hand and paying close attention to what's going on around them.



After 5 years of loyal service the Opel Manta goes into retirement in July 1986 and is replaced with the new Volkswagen Jetta.



## WHERE THERE'S SMOKE...

Everything had been fine and dandy for Klein Kromhof Houtvezels so far but on the 3rd of July 2006 a great fire at the front of the building caused by an explosion in the filtration system struck the complex. The fire had started in the afternoon and was discovered by a neighbour. A strong wind and an extensive period of drought was a disastrous combination which proved more than a challenge for the fire department. Neighbouring business and residential areas were identified as being at risk, and the smoke could even be seen at the A35 Highway near the city of Almelo.



The fire department was forced to upscale their operations and by 8:45 PM no less than 60 firefighters were battling the flames. Water was directly pumped from the nearby Stouwe canal. A malfunctioning pump set things up for a slow start, but luckily the pump's operating power could be restored. Help came from an unexpected source, the Dutch army was close on a training exercise close by and lent a hand.





In the aftermath of the fire the business was in trouble, suppliers were still faithfully delivering, but the manufacturing process had ground to a halt. After much hard work, organisation and dedication, operations could be restored.



Jeroen Klein Kromhof

“ Of all days, our parents wedding anniversary got completely ruined by a heavy fire. We saw fire engines heading towards us. Your heart skips a beat when you realise they are coming to a halt opposite your parents' house - at the business.

Relationship management proved its weight in gold when our customers showed understanding for our situation, and we were able to calmly work together towards solutions to deliver our product. It is our strength to never give up, but the impact of such an event on the business can not be denied and preventive measures are aimed to protect against future fires.

Every step in the production process is closely aligned and sparks landing somewhere else could have fatal consequences. Storage quotas are taken into account when building a factory hall to prevent the starting and spreading of fires.

Rising from the ashes, as a play on words, is inspirational, but we would much rather prevent this from happening. Even one such fire is one too many and results in a setback.





6

# TRUCK COLLECTION

# SOME IMAGES





## A NEW GENERATION PRESENTS ITSELF

Not only the business was expanding. Gerhard and Henny were blessed with four children: three boys and one girl. Henny was still able to manage both her administration job and the raising of the children. The children were introduced to the world of wood shavings at a young age. It was to nobody's surprise that when Gerhard decided to take a step back due to health reasons in 2009, two sons, Hendri and Jeroen, took over the company duties.

At first there were no reasons to introduce a big overhaul - as often happens with a company takeover. Klein Kromhof Houtvezels was doing well enough.





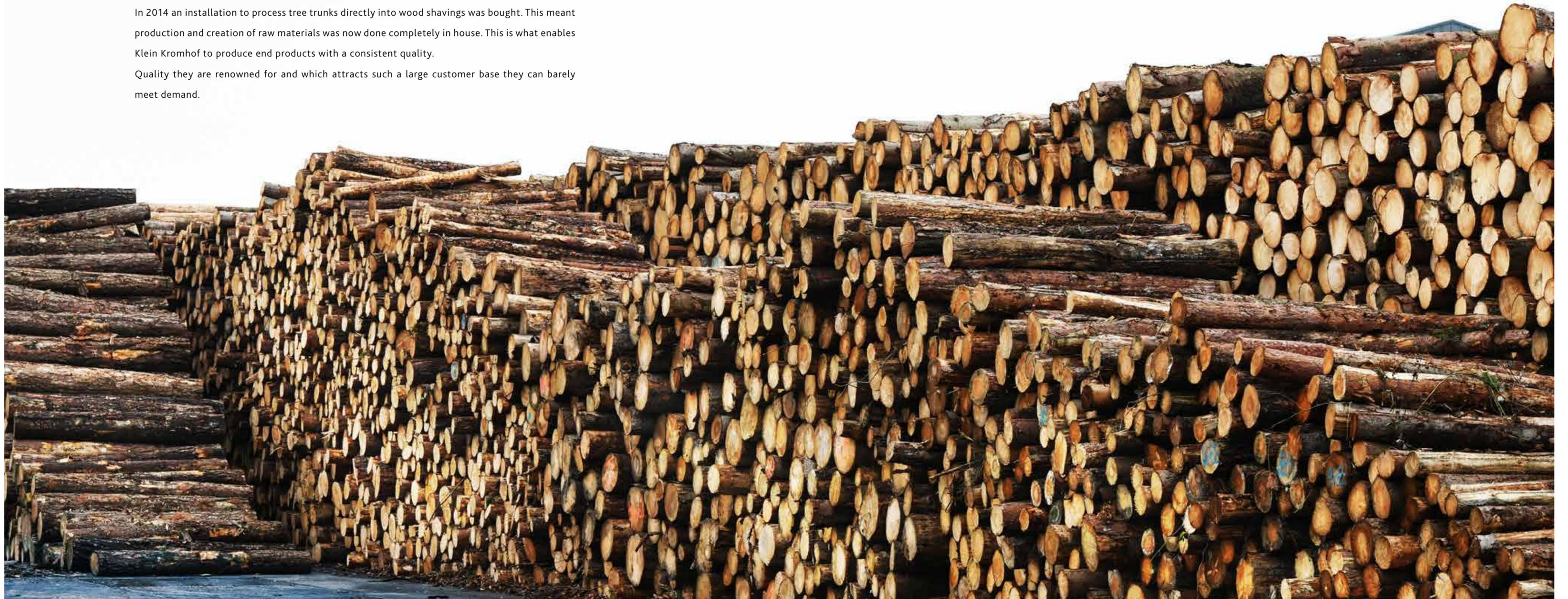


Problems were on the horizon, when during the 2010 economic recession, supply of residual wood needed to make wood shavings decreased and the price rose exponentially. The decision was made to invest heavily in the purchasing of wood drying equipment.

This enabled the purchasing and processing of undried wood materials. Due to being less in demand than pre-dried wood these materials were cheaper and in effect this investment gave Klein Kromhof a massive market share. The total cost of production was lowered due to the cheaper raw materials.



In 2014 an installation to process tree trunks directly into wood shavings was bought. This meant production and creation of raw materials was now done completely in house. This is what enables Klein Kromhof to produce end products with a consistent quality. Quality they are renowned for and which attracts such a large customer base they can barely meet demand.





Hendri Klein Kromhof:

*“Innovate and work towards clear goals”*

”

Being the eldest son, Hendri Klein Kromhof has had close ties with the business since the year 2000. “How does that work? As a youngster you are already assisting your father and his customers in his business. Against popular belief you don’t just automatically enter the business. I was studying to become a mechanic at the time, and wanted to decide for myself what I truly wanted to do. As a born perfectionist I want things to run smoothly. This makes me tough on myself and others. The fact our employees stay with us for years on end must mean we are doing something right. The approximately 20 permanent staff members, parttime employees and temporary staff member are worth their weight in gold. Being united in having the same clear goals greatly affects the quality of the business. Stay true to yourself, care for your work and acknowledge others for doing the same.

Trying to be the boss won’t do you any favours. Don’t be afraid to do things outside your immediate scope that you might encounter. Innovate when needed, stagnation only results in your business going backwards. We try to automate where possible, as we have been using automation and robots in our processes for years. We never forget about the human factor though.

I admire my father’s work as a pioneer. As sons we can expand on his legacy with modern techniques which has enabled us to become a market leader in our trade. Feeling fulfilled should never take over. It takes vigilance and sharpness to remain on this level. As brothers we challenge each other and the go-getter attitude is in our blood.”



“

Jeroen Klein Kromhof:

## *“Aligning price and quality”*

” Second born son Jeroen Klein Kromhof (35) did not fancy “the dusty mess” as described in his own words at all. He became self-employed aged 18. “I could not deny the enterprising urge. Armed with my business card I set out to sell ground cover. This got me all over the place and slowly my customer base and sales grew.

I felt new possibilities could be created with selling wood pellets and started the Jekro company. I was asked to join the company group in 2009 that at that point had modernised its operations. The business has matured greatly with the investment in state of the art equipment like the wood drying and processing equipment for example. Having been subsidised by the government has helped us grow exponentially. Investing responsibly has paid off and this a daring feat. Logistic prowess is of the utmost importance, thinking of processing complete tree logs alone. So is world-wide relation building, which is greatly helped if you manage to align price and quality. This is trust that you earn and requires consistency.

We are always thinking of expanding, but this has to be done realistically, we don't want to overextend ourselves. This was taught to us by our parents, who grew up in different times. There are similarities as well though, especially our attitude to never give up, which we inherited from our parents. Having to deal with such a heavy fire impacts you greatly. We never gave up. Moments like that prove the importance of rapport with your relations, something that we will always maintain.”



BUSINESS GOING GLOBAL





Ceriel Klein Kromhof:

*“Do and stick to what you agreed to do”*



”

Youngest son Ceriel Klein Kromhof (30) was well known as a professional racing motorist, having won several international prizes. His brothers Jeroen en Hendri were quite successful motorists as well, but did not even come close to Ceriel. The sporty youngest sibling always received plenty of support of his parents and siblings, but did not always receive the same amount of understanding. “This is something that became clear to me on Mondays, when I was cleaning my bike. I could feel the judging gazes silently saying: ‘When is he going to get a proper job?’. Outsiders don’t realise how much training, dedication and hard work is required to perform at this level. It was my choice to make the required sacrifices and go pro. Breaking bones is quite common in this sport and as I grew older I was forced to make a choice. My advice is to never hold back, just as in Motocross. Eventually I did enter the family business and dedicated myself to the wood shaving process. A high quality wood product is important and I still had to learn how to best achieve this. Just as during my Motocross days I learned by trial and error. I feel like I’m in my element dealing with the many contacts required around the purchasing process. Doing what you agreed to do surely resonates with me. My brothers and I are a team, but each of us has their own duties and qualities. Being a market leader takes pushing yourself, but also each other to the limits. Our staff members are the same. Being energetic is the trademark of our family business. I have a realistic outlook on our future growth. We focus on the continuation of our current operations and will only expand where it is realistically possible.”



“



9

# THE MOTORIST

# GERIEL IN ACTION



- 2004** - Dutch Champion 85cc
- 2005** - Champion ADAC Junior Cup 85 cc
- Champion Int. Nat. Youth Weekend 85cc (14/16 jaar)
- Dutch Champion 85 cc (won 7 out of 8 heats dropped out due to technical problems) - 2nd place
- 2006** - Champion Int. Nat. Jeugdweekend MX2
- ADAC Youngster Cup (15 t/m 21 years) - 2nd place
- Champion Coupe de L' Avenir
- Worldchampion junior Finland - 8th place
- 2007** - MX 2 European Championships - 9th place
- 2008** - MX 2 European Championships - 5th place
- Vice Worldchampion MX 2
- MX 2 Coupe de L' Avenir - 3rd place (individual)
- Team Netherlands - 2nd place
- 2009** - MX 2 World Championships - 30th place
- Open Dutch Championships - 7th place
- 2010** - Champion European Championships MX de Nations
- MX 2 Open Dutch Championships - 3rd place
- 2011** - Champion European Championships MC de Nations
- 2012** - Injured
- 2013** - MX 2 Open Dutch Championships 3rd place
- 3x podium European Championships
- 2014** - MX 1 Open Dutch Championships 2nd place
- 2 x podium European Championships
- 2015** - MX 1 Open Dutch Championships 2nd place
- 2016** - MX 1 Open Dutch Championships 4th place



Berinda Derksen-Klein Kromhof:

*“Entrepreneurship is in our blood.”*

”

Berinda Derksen-Klein Kromhof (33) has left her mark being self-employed as well.

She did not join the family business Klein Kromhof, Daarlervveen. She finished her base and specialist courses in 2006. Gerhard's and Henny's third born child was a natural born beauty technician according to her mother. She was only 17 when she was practising her trade on a gardening chair in her parents' bathroom.

Berinda has fond memories of her youth. “We were aware of our situation and what was expected of us as kids. Our father was working and our mother managed the bookkeeping and our family. Each role was clearly specified. Working hard was expected, no exceptions for us kids. When I was 13 I was cleaning machinery in our business. After 2 years, while I was in secondary school I decided to do something else and took up a part-time job as a waitress at Harwig, Den Ham. I created my own business soon after I started my trade-specific courses. Balancing work and private life is something our family finds hard, but we realise the importance. It is incredible to see how much the family business has grown. Entrepreneurship is in our blood, which we all have shown.

I'm so proud of my mom and dad and their achievements. I now realise how much hard work is needed to build a business from the ground up and make it prosper. Everybody can start their own company, but building and maintaining a healthy business takes a lot. And you can't forget about your private life. I'm very grateful for where my brothers and I ended up and how well they are doing together. Very cool. I hope the family business will continue to do well for years to come. “



According to Hendri Klein Kromhof innovation is in the now 40 years old Daarlerveen-based family business' DNA. "This shows in the development of our products through the years. The wood shavings and sawdust are processed into environment-friendly ground covers for the farming trade. Market-leading quality is maintained with an optimised and automated shaving and pressing process. One of the requirements to remain in their position. This creates world-wide customer loyalty".

Hendri shares more examples of how the business has grown. "The biomass' optimal capacity was achieved in 2011. It meant a massive investment had to be made at the time - but this resulted in a breakthrough when it came to dried wood products. Green energy has boosted our business. The entire operation takes place at the same location with optimised production processes. These pictures give a perfect image of the quality assurance and growth of our business."



## AN OVERVIEW OF KLEIN KROMHOF - 2020

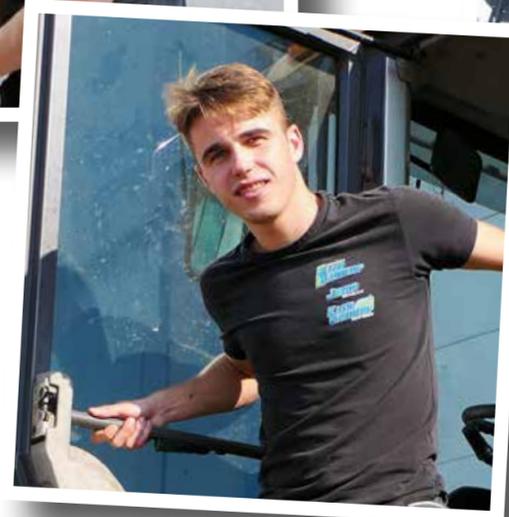
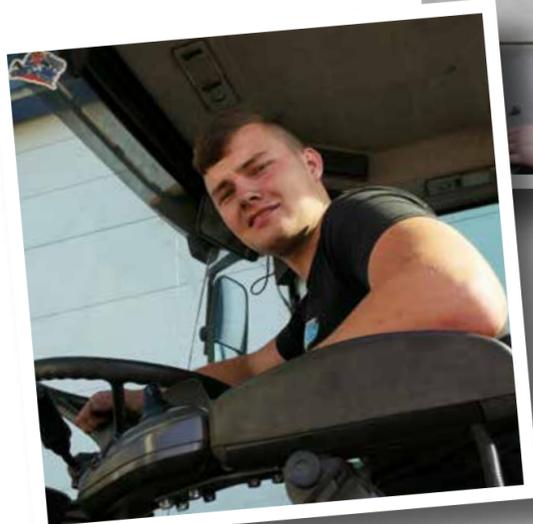
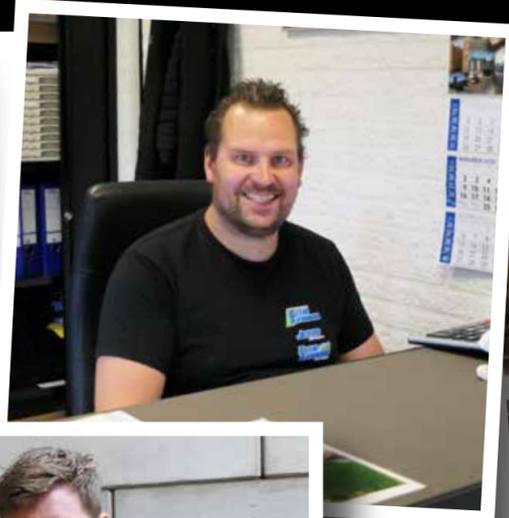


The enterprising gentlemen have been expanding the production processes, and have - since 2017 - tripled production capacity. At this precise moment in time a 100,000 square metre location is producing and shipping a top notch quality product to a world-wide customer base. They are one of the largest suppliers in the world. They have at least 19 permanent staff members and hire plenty of temporary workers where needed.



11

WHO GETS THE JOB DONE?





**Teksten / Copy:**

Klein Kromhof Houtvezels B.V., Hans Nieboer (interviews)

**Tekstredactie / Text editor:**

Bedrijfsboek - John Mulder, Klaas Dragt, Wout Mulder (Engelse tekst/English text)

**Vormgeving / Design:**

Buro Kordaat

**Fotografie / Photography:**

Archief Klein Kromhof Houtvezels B.V., Stefan Schipper Fotografie, Float 360, Buro Kordaat

**NUR-code:**

680

**ISBN:**

9789493072039



*HOUTVEZELS*  
**KLEIN  
KROMHOF**

**JEKRO**  
*HOUTPELLETS*

**KLEIN**   
**KROMHOF**  
*GREEN ENERGY*