

# From common sense to global player: accelerating growth at Nooyen Group

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Paul Peeters

## Nooyen Group continues to grow with support from the Make The Future programme

*Ideas and plans to modernize their unique factory? The manufacturer of barn floors for piglets and calves had enough of that. And yet Nooyen Group found added value in the Make The Future programme. "Purely internally, we had not succeeded. But thanks to inspiration from other companies, support from Sirris and Agoria and the expertise of their network."*

At ? ?Nooyen Pig Flooring in Hechtel-Eksel, entrepreneurial blood has been flowing at a rapid pace since 1978. "We come from a farming family, with common sense," says Gerben Nooyen, third generation in the family business. "My grandfather and his 6 sons were not satisfied with what was available in the market at the time in terms of stable floors. That's why the family got to work themselves."

This pioneering spirit led to a technological global company, whose products combine hygiene, animal welfare and profitability for the farmers. As a Belgian producer, they now export worldwide

to the growing pig farming industry in the US, South America and China. South America and Paraguay are new growth countries.


ZOOYEN

## Future-proof in expensive production country

The family-owned company is growing by 10 to 15 percent each year, with plans to accelerate growth. This requires new choices and inspiration to grow production capacity. This search gave rise to participation in Make The Future. This is the Agoria-Sirris programme, in which the two organisations join forces to assist companies in their journey to become a Factory of the Future in a structured way.

> **"The name alone appealed to us. As a family business, we are in it for the long term. To still be the top player in thirty years, we have to get ready today. Because Belgium is an expensive country to produce. Although that doesn't have to be a disadvantage, as long as people and processes are used optimally."**
> **Gerben Nooyen, general manager at Nooyen Pig Flooring**

With Arjan Lenoir, manager of manufacturing & engineering, they brought in a suitable profile. He was experienced in lean manufacturing, but could not immediately translate his knowledge and experience about lean into the processes at Nooyen. "From high-tech series production to 'specialist customization' is quite a big step. So at first I had more questions than answers... Thanks to the Make The Future process, I found the starting points to accelerate our program."

The first challenge? Structurally embedding the knowledge and experience of the employees in the processes. "A lot of craftsmanship is in our people, whose retirement age is approaching. And so it comes down to converting their knowledge into work processes in a timely manner."

## Knocking on the door with a concrete problem

Nooyen already had contacts with Agoria and Sirris on other themes. "We had a concrete problem: being able to plan production more transparently. But we also didn't want to set up a system that was too complex. 'Call Paul from Agoria', Gerben suggested. 'We pay our membership and can always call on them'."

An initial consultation soon followed. Lenoir: "I had a concrete question with me and got many more answers than I had questions. When Paul Peeters, community relationship officer at Agoria, drew my attention to the Make The Future program, my interest was immediately piqued." That became the starting point. From that first concrete issue, Nooyen Pig Flooring rolled into the process that would make the entire factory future-proof.



## Thorough feedback from experts

Participation in the process gave structure to ongoing initiatives. "We already had a lot of ideas," says Lenoir. "In the model with the 7 transformations , we were able to categorize these ideas. That gave a stepping stone and extra guidance. Moreover, the feedback from the experts was thorough and useful." The company visits via the learning network also made an impression. "It was special to look behind the scenes at others. We recognized a lot, saw that we were not alone in our challenges and got new ideas. For example, we took ? ?over the idea from Hela to incorporate fluorescent in the workwear."

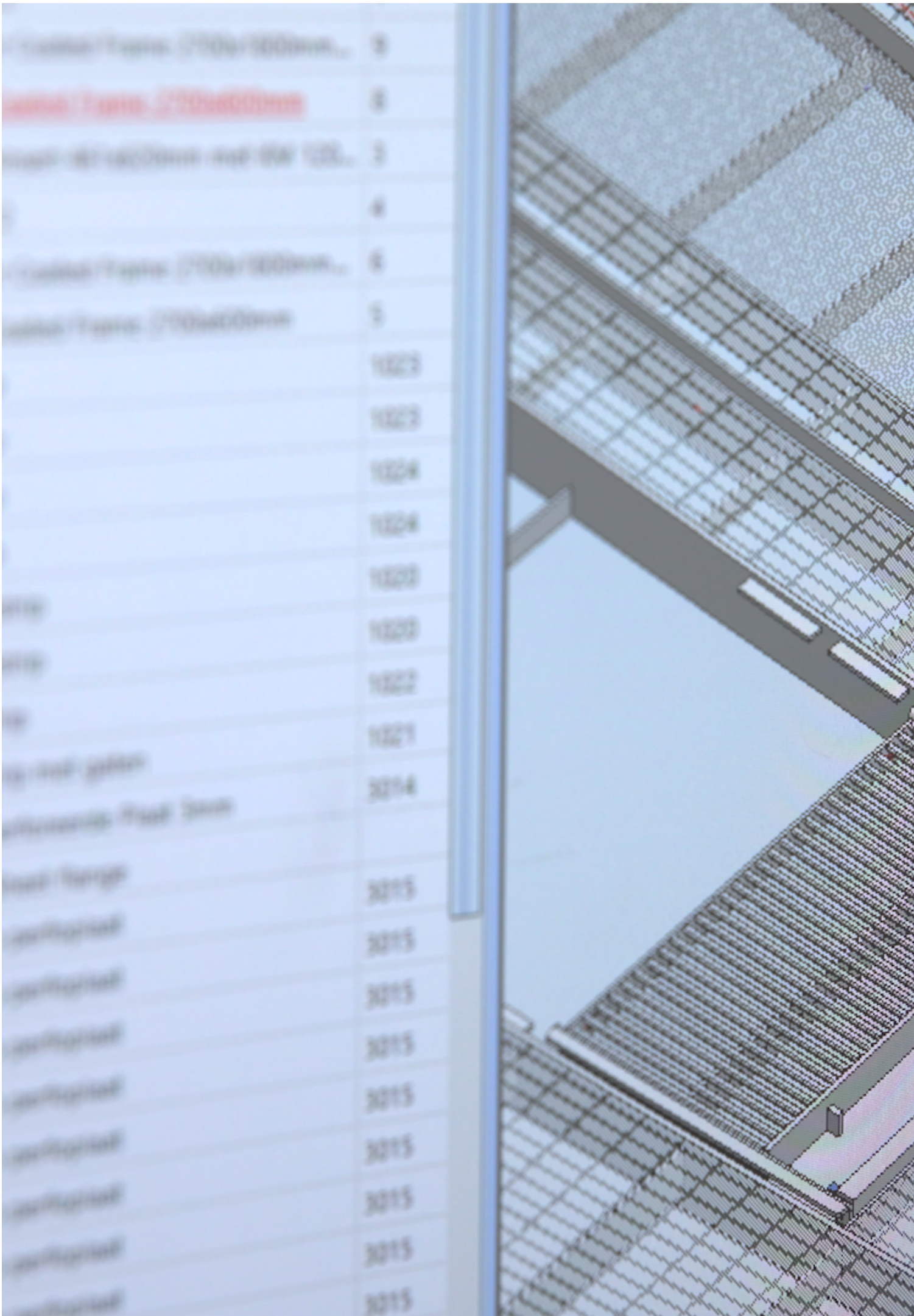
The added value of the process also lies in the cross-pollination with other sectors. From here, the list of realizations grows every month. Nooyen invested in energy efficiency. It replaced old compressors with a new installation, saving 27,000 kWh per year annually.

In the forwarding sector, the new layout of the warehouse will generate a potential benefit of 50,000 euros per year. Reducing waste in the top coating process will save about 20,000 euros per year. Small improvements, such as fluorescent elements in workwear or optimisations in mould designs and weld site improvements, also ensure tangible results.

> **“It was a great experience to get a look inside other companies. We recognized a lot, saw that we’re not alone in facing these challenges, and gained new ideas.”**
>
> **Arjan Lenoir, Manager Manufacturing & Engineering at Nooyen Pig Flooring**

## Unique software module boosts engineering productivity by a factor of 60

Digital progress opens up even more possibilities. "For example, we are unique in the world with our newly developed software module, which provides the 3D models of our floors with a millimetre-thick coating at the touch of a button. "Previously, drawing the characteristic blue floor coating took at least one hour per order, or thousands of drawing hours per year", says Lenoir. "In collaboration with our 3D CAD supplier ISD Benelux, that drawing work now only takes us the time of one cup of coffee. This project also fits perfectly into Sirris Agoria's Make The Future programme."



Nooyen looks ahead from the current improvements: "I dare say that within five years we will have the most efficient and pleasant production environment in the region. Then people will automatically want to come and work for us, instead of us having to look for them."

## Ready to take the first step towards becoming a Factory of the Future?

Discover the exclusive offer from Agoria and Sirris to support Belgian manufacturing companies in their modernization process. Schedule an appointment now for an inspiring conversation about the seven transformations and discover how you can achieve the transition to a true Factory of the Future.

Find out how Make the Future can help your business thrive

Book a no-obligation evaluation

## Authors




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