

Dutch HACCP - Case Study

Bouter Cheese is a private label specialist working closely with their principal customer, the Dutch retailer Albert Heijn. They are an independent company with a turnover of €200 million. There are 165 full-time employees and between 80 and 200 seasonal workers depending on the time of year.

At their factory in Culemborg, near Utrecht in the Netherlands, they mature Dutch-produced Gouda cheese that they slice and pack along with a range of other European cheeses. Albert Heijn deal with price negotiation. Bouter Cheese take accountability for supplier management and product control. They have actively invested to create an efficient and modern manufacturing environment.

Originally, quality was managed through a local, uncertified system that relied on a combination of good record keeping and process knowledge. However, in 1999 their approach changed and they achieved certification to the Dutch HACCP system. This has given them a structured approach to process control and has supported the rapid growth of the company.



Bert Hijkoop

Bert Hijkoop is the Quality Assurance Manager. After many years as a third party certification auditor, including working to the BRC and IFS standards, he is now able to bring his experience to working with product. Bert says *“The different systems are all seeking to achieve the same thing. BRC and IFS look more at product and Dutch HACCP looks more at systems. They can all deliver good results.”*

For Bert, the key to driving continuous improvement at Bouter Cheese is with the people. He says: *“We want to take quality through to a new level by really engaging our people. They are the ones that own and deliver quality for our customer and they need the right systems and also strong management support. We’ve developed our own e-learning system that supports the knowledge development of our teams. As they improve their understanding of HACCP principles I can see that we continue to get better”*

“ It’s not enough to just tell our customers we are safe and legal, we also need to prove it in a way that will give us all confidence. That’s why we first got together in 1995; food technology academics with the retailers, the manufacturers and the service providers, to define a common approach based on Codex that resulted in Dutch HACCP”

Theo Cieremans

Chairman of the SCV Foundation that owns the Dutch HACCP Scheme and supports the Central Board of Experts