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HOOGSTRATE

*Sustainability Report 2014*



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# Foreword

*Dear reader,*

‘Sustainability’ is an operational verb. This can be seen from the contents of this report that lead you through the operations of the past year.

This 2014 Sustainability Report holds up a mirror to us: for us, it is a tool to include sustainability as a parameter in all the areas of decisions to an increasing degree. For you as a reader, it is a useful means to keep your involvement with our cooperative up to date or renew it. So, if you have any questions or comments arising from going through this report, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We wish you lots of reading pleasure and thank you for the attention you pay to this report. With cooperative greetings,



Dirk Van den Plas,  
Chairman



Gaston Opdekamp,  
Director

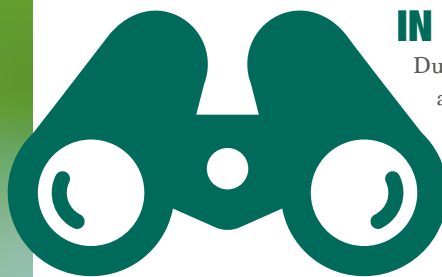
June 2015

An extensive financial report is available at [www.veilinghoogstraten.be](http://www.veilinghoogstraten.be)

This sustainability report has been prepared according to the GRI guidelines. You can find the GRI table and the materiality index at the end of this report.



# Key Themes



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

During the past year, we have actively applied ourselves in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In cooperation with producers, customers and suppliers, we continually work on making the supply chain of vegetables and fruit sustainable.

**Our highlights in 2014:**

## PRODUCT TURNOVER

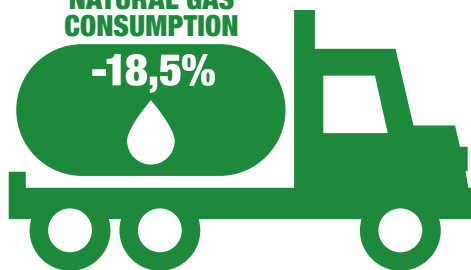
**193 MILLION**

(+10,5% COMPARED TO 2013)



## NATURAL GAS CONSUMPTION

**-18,5%**



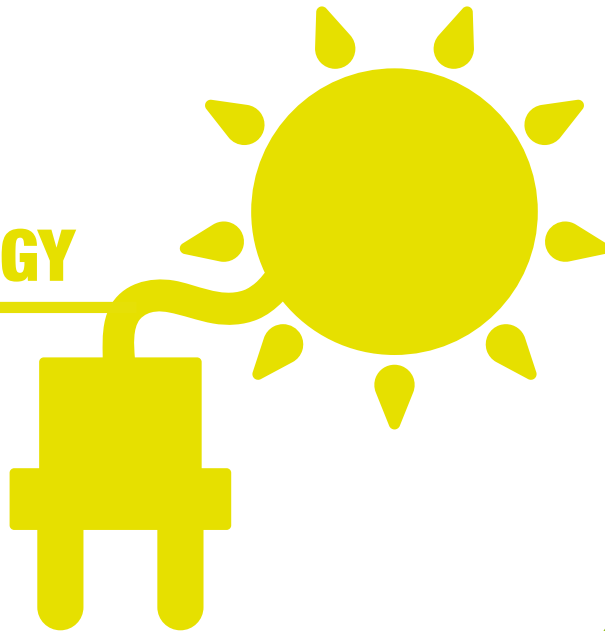
## ELECTRICITY-CONSUMPTION

**-8% COMPARED TO VOLUME OF TRADED PRODUCT**



## GENERATED SOLAR-ENERGY

EQUAL TO THE ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION OF 120 FAMILIES



## SPECIAL RECOGNITION

RECEIPT OF SECOND CSR CHARTER AND HAVELAAR (FAIRTRADE) IN 2014

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING  
12% MORE INVESTED IN TRAINING



## TRANSPORT

100% ELECTRICAL FORKLIFT TRUCKS



-15% RESIDUAL WASTE COMPARED TO 2013

## A GREAT WORKING ENVIRONMENT

LOW TURNOVER RATE: 2,5% (2013: 2,6%)  
DECREASED ABSENTEEISM RATE: 2,43% (2013: 3,11%)





# Key Moments 2014



In 2014, the **acreage** of fruit vegetables increased substantially: tomatoes by 13% and sweet peppers by 24%. The development in the tomatoes is a result of expansions at existing growers; with sweet peppers, we have seen an influx from some large Dutch companies. The strawberry acreage remained virtually constant.



It was decided to adapt the **vegetable warehouse** along the north side for **night and weekend loading**. For this purpose, roll-up walls were hung up and air conditioning and heating was installed. In the course of April, everything was completed.



For the first time in its history, our auction can offer strawberries from our own beds **all year round**. The illuminated Sonata culture results in top quality and was in great demand during the Fruit Logistica in Berlin.



For the summer, a start was made on the plans for building a new packing department. The building will be more than 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> in size, with a conditioned section of 3,500 m<sup>2</sup> and a section for storage of packaging and the necessary staff rooms. At the end of the summer, work was also done on the renewal of the agreements for the central sorting of sweet peppers at our auction. The rate will be set somewhat more competitively and all the growers are again subscribing for a period of five years (2015-2020).



On 7 August 2014, Russia announced an import ban on EU products. In response to this, the EU freed € 125 million for vegetables and fruit. The measure for the spending of € 125 million was for not harvesting. After the suspension of the initial wave of EU measures, a new measure will be enacted later. On the basis of historical figures, each country will be allocated a quota of vegetables and fruit that can be taken off the market by intervention and at a temporarily increased subsidy amount. For Belgium, a volume of 43,000 tonnes of fruit and 18,000 tonnes of vegetables has been freed up.

*Pleasant first edition  
of summer party*



Our auction is a Fairtrade ambassador



On 23 August 2014, Veiling Hoogstraten organised a summer party for its members and their families for the first time. It was a convivial summer barbecue in the organization's grounds with snacks, drinks and children's entertainment. Well worth repeating!



For the second time in a row, Veiling Hoogstraten received a **CSR charter**, and in September 2014, the auction also became a **Fairtrade ambassador** by achieving a Havelaar.



The Board of Directors is providing clarity concerning the periods in which people can become members: **membership** must be applied for before 1 October of each working year to take effect from 1 January of the following year. After a membership application, there is a reflection period until 1 November to join effectively. With no contrary indications, the Board of Directors will accept an application.



The **GMO regulations** are being amended so that grower investments will henceforth be accepted for an amount up to € 30,000 per year per grower over five years. Veiling Hoogstraten is temporarily limiting the actions eligible for subsidies to investments focused on diversification: the harvesting protection for cherries and small fruit (various berries).



During The General Meeting of November 2014, the members of **CLTV Zundert** decided to nominate a new Board member and chairman as a successor to Jack Roelands. Rinie van Tilburg took his seat in the course of December.



The year was closed with a **product turnover** of € 193 million compared to € 174 million in 2013, or a turnover increase of 10.5%. In terms of volume, 150,000 tonnes of product was placed compared to 133,000 in 2013. This means a new record was established both in terms of turnover and volume. Tomatoes and strawberries realised a good average annual price; sweet peppers and cucumbers scored less well.

Top delivery of strawberries:  
385,000 kg  
on 26 May 2014



The adapted vegetable warehouse



# 1 Company profile

## HISTORY, MISSION AND CORE VALUES

### MORE THAN 80 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

Veiling Hoogstraten is a remarkable player in the Belgian auction landscape. With a 10.5% increase in product turnover, the goal of Veiling Hoogstraten is to continue making the Belgian horticultural sector dynamic. The ideal feeding ground for vegetables and fruit? This is the cooperation between people with a view for quality, innovation and sustainability. It is in such a climate that Veiling Hoogstraten cooperates with its growers, customers and suppliers.

Grower Cooperative Veiling Hoogstraten in the North of Belgium was established in 1933 and has achieved enormous growth, especially during recent years. Today, strawberries, tomatoes, sweet peppers and other horticultural products in the region account for an annual auction turnover of more than € 190 million. Of these, 60% is intended for export to Europe, America and the Middle East.

The auction forms an important link between producer and customer in the supply chain of fresh vegetables and fruit. In this context, quality and food safety are today's significant spearheads. More than 200 growers market their products via Veiling Hoogstraten. The cooperative also aims to supply quality all year round and continually improve its efficiency by optimising processes. Continuous investment is essential to face the challenges that confront companies.

The cooperative has developed strong brands throughout the years. The brands Hoogstraten®, Flandria and Specialty Street can today no longer be ignored in the vegetable and fruit sector.

Veiling Hoogstraten has some 77 employees. A no-nonsense approach, short lines, clear communication and transparency, proper infrastructure and cost control are the spearheads at Veiling Hoogstraten.

### MOST REMARKABLE: THE COOPERATIVE

#### Together to the market

Veiling Hoogstraten is a cooperative company, with the member producers as partners. Together they own the company Veiling Hoogstraten. The main goal of the cooperative is the improvement of the income for the member producers. The cooperative does this in the first place by concentrating the supply and organising the marketing of vegetables and fruit. The cooperative also provides various other services and activities.

Cooperative cooperation relies on six values, specifically democracy, equality, justice, solidarity, sense of responsibility and self-help. To bring these values into practice, Veiling Hoogstraten inspires itself with seven cooperative principles.



1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic management
3. Economic involvement
4. Independence
5. Education, training and information
6. Mutual cooperation
7. Responsibility towards the community

**MISSION AND VISION**

The provision of healthy, safe and sustainably produced food.

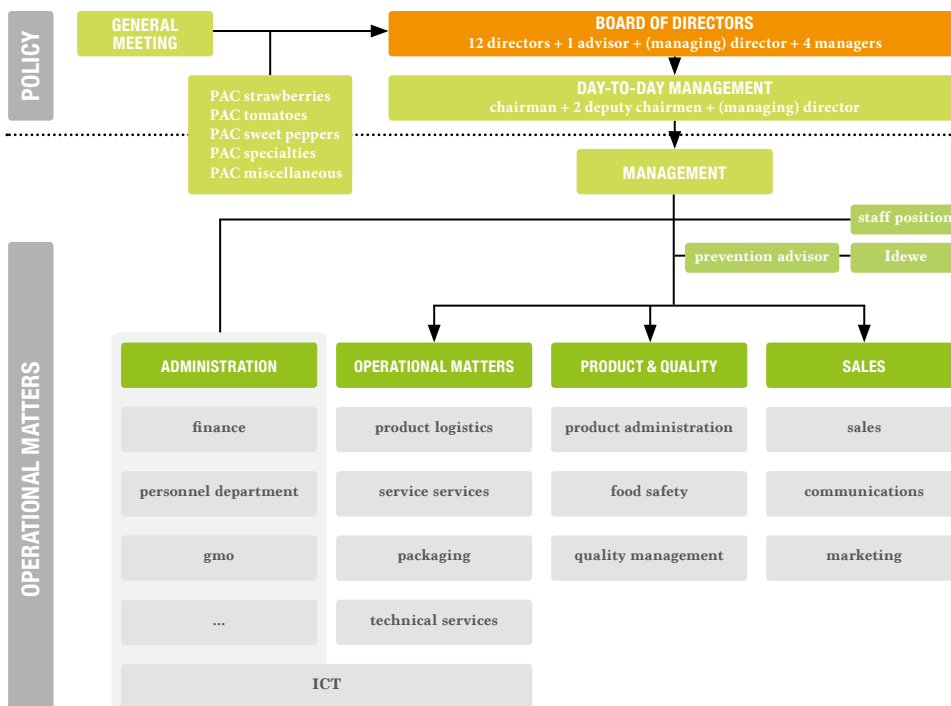
Veiling Hoogstraten aims for a Sustainable growth of the horticultural sector in a healthy and profitable entrepreneurs' climate. Central to this are specialisation, quality, service provision, innovation, cost control and sustainability.

The Board of Directors, the highest body after the General meeting, is composed of elected producers with voting rights and is responsible for taking policy decisions. The Board of Directors consists of 12 member producers, the management and advisors; only the former have voting rights. This is how the members have the administrative power. The Board of Directors has a four-weekly meeting calendar. At the level of cultivation specialities, involvement is possible via the growers' meetings (specifically for each product) and the product advice committees (PACs). During these consultations, the producers meet each other to discuss cultivation-specific agenda items. Producers from the Board of Directors automatically have a seat in the PAC. In the past working year, there was a noticeable decrease in the membership. The value of the cooperative share amounts to € 4.00.

## MEMBERSHIP

Movement	Members	Number of shares	Amount (€)
31 Dec. 2013	1.030	88.844	355.376,00
left	-37	-3.063	-12.252,00
new members	7	420	1.680,00
31 Dec. 2014	1.000	86.201	344.804,00

## ORGANISATION CHART





*Our stakeholders can count on continuous efforts for people, planet, and profit.*



## INTERNAL CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CHARTER

### A PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN CONTROL, STRATEGY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Veiling Hoogstraten applies the principles of Corporate Governance to demarcate the responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the management as properly as possible and to avoid conflicts of interests. Corporate Governance is focused on the improvement of quality, transparency and the distribution of information. The operation of the Board of Directors requires a proper balance between control, strategy and entrepreneurship. The principles of corporate governance are contained in an internal Corporate Governance Charter.

## INCREASING EXPANSION OF SCALE AND SPECIALISATION

### INVESTING IN LONG-TERM STRATEGY AND INNOVATION

The producers' landscape in the vegetables and fruit sector is strongly subject to changes. Upscaling and specialisation continue at a rapid pace. A decrease in the number of active producers in combination with stricter legislation are only a couple of examples of this. The selling cooperative must continually question the strategy and the role that it can play in the sector to align its services as much as possible to the needs of the existing and future producers. Investing in long-term strategy is investing in innovation.

## WHY OPT FOR SUSTAINABLE HORTICULTURE?

### COOPERATING FOR SUSTAINABLE FRESHNESS

Cooperation provides added value with a clearly positive economic and social effect for the producers of vegetables and fruit. For both the current and future generations, we operate in a sustainable manner and we also encourage our growers to do this. For this, we provide encouragement concerning food safety, water and energy consumption, integrated culture, recuperation and recirculation, transparent selling system, social commitment, etc.

Numerous measures can already be seen on our sites: solar panels, water reservoirs, a structured waste policy, noise management, safety, and electrical forklift trucks are the most visible interventions. As a cooperative, we want to take on our responsibility and role in sustainable development by working proactively around these themes. Because we represent a collective of hundreds of growers, we can in this way send a strong signal throughout the food supply chain.

### AMBITIONS

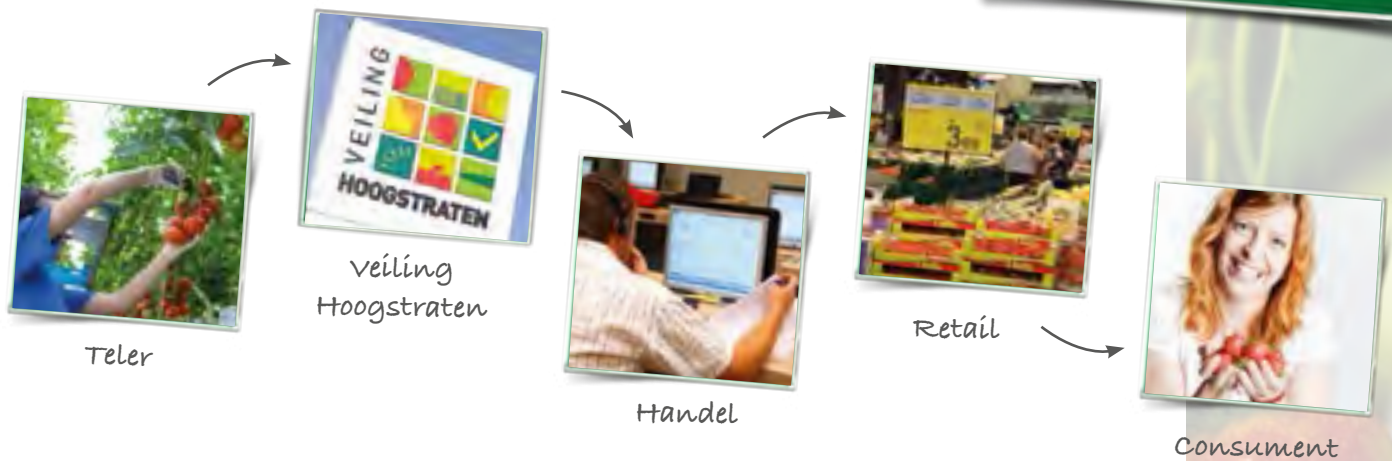
The priority in the coming years will be on sharpening the existing goals and establishing specific action points within our sustainability vision. Over the coming years, a lot of time will be invested in sharing and vitalizing our sustainability vision with our employees and the members of the cooperative. To achieve this, Veiling Hoogstraten is making use of the system of the CSR charter and the collective sustainability quality label 'Responsibly Fresh'. For each of the areas of attention, the goals, actions and initiatives are summarised for the coming years in this report.

## PERMANENT IMPROVEMENT

Sustainable development is a working verb. Especially now trade and consumers are showing interest in the origins of each product. Each customer wants qualitative sustainably produced vegetables and fruit. With good reason. In order to meet their expectations increasingly better, we allow them to inspire us. The horticulture sector is continually changing, not least in the area of sustainability. Our stakeholders can count on continuous efforts for people, planet, and profit.

## VALUE CHAIN

Veiling Hoogstraten has a role in the value chain, as the collecting wholesaler of the supply from the member producers and as supplier to a diverse group of buyers. This unique role is achieved by means of a set of specific activities.



## QUALITY MANAGEMENT

### VEILING HOOGSTRATEN: VOEDINGSBODEM VOOR TOPKWALITEIT

Quality and food safety? These start with the grower. Customers and consumers must be able to rely completely on the safety of vegetables and fruit. Therefore Veiling Hoogstraten maintains a strict quality policy and continually checks on the compliance with it.

The Product & Quality department consists of 12 quality controllers who take care of the safeguarding of the product's quality and the food safety. In addition, at CLTV Zundert, there are also quality controllers actively busy checking the quality of the strawberries. After all, these strawberries are also sold under the Hoogstraten® label.

The quality labels that are carried in Hoogstraten are Flandria for vegetables and Hoogstraten for the strawberries, kiwi fruit and other berries. Both the quality labels not only stand for quality, but also for food safety and environmental awareness: products grown under these quality labels must satisfy the specifications of both GlobalGap and Vegaplan. The auction places the emphasis on an environmentally aware growing process and on the craftsmanship of specialised family companies. There is also the aim of the best possible traceability with a view to food safety. The food safety certificates achieved, such as IFS, ACS (Gids Handel) and QS therefore guarantee this.

### SUBSEQUENT CHECK AND SHELF-LIFE CHECK

After immediate inspection on delivery, there is equally as much effort spent on subsequent checking, especially with strawberries. The internal quality of the products is also extensively monitored. Thus aspects including the shelf life of strawberries, tomatoes, cucumbers and sweet peppers from each grower and each plot are continually checked. After one night's cooling, strawberries are stored for four days at 12°C and 80% Relative Humidity (RH). The vegetables are stored for a week at 18°C and 80% RH. In total, during 2014, more than 6,400 product samples were placed in special shelf-life units in this way and assessed. The results of both shelf-life and the subsequent checks are always fed back to both the grower and the quality controller, who take them into account at the next inspection with delivery.

*A lot of effort is spent in subsequent checking in order to guarantee the best quality*



### RESIDUE MONITORING

Another important internal quality check is residue monitoring. That this is also an important item is proven by the approximately 500 residue samples that the auction had analysed via multi-screening (GCMS and LCMS) in 2014 by Fytolab in Ghent or Labo Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. In addition, another approximately 70 tomato samples were analysed for ethephon as pre-harvesting samples. Besides checking for the presence of residues of crop protection substances, the delivered products are also checked for the presence of contaminants and microbiology. This examination takes place in batches with respect to Lava and under supervision of KDT. Contaminants investigated in 2014 were mainly heavy metals. This investigation was performed by the POVLT in Beitem. The investigated microbial parameters were *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and the Enterobacteraceae, and the psychotrophic plate count. 10% of these samples were also checked for VTEC. Microbial analyses were performed by the Servaco Food Control NV lab in Wetteren.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Almost all of our production companies were externally audited in 2014 for compliance with specific production conditions. These audits were performed by the independent auditing organisations TÜV-Nord Integra België and CK-Cert, steered by the responsible company visits from Veiling Hoogstraten. This way enabled swift monitoring of which companies were already certified or not, which is important for the selling. The companies were audited for GlobalGap and, if necessary, once in three years, also at the same time for Vegaplan and the Gids auto-audit. Some companies were also positively audited against the Nurture standard. This certificate enables these companies to sell their products to the UK supermarket chain of TESCO.

The auction itself was also successfully audited on various (quality) management systems with the emphasis mainly on food safety. Thus, in March 2014, Veiling Hoogstraten underwent a successful audit by TÜV-Nord Integra België for both IFS and QS. The same month there followed a successful re-audit for ISO 9001. This audit was conducted by TÜV-Nord Integra Nederland. To enable these certificates to be achieved and retained, Veiling Hoogstraten has already for many years described its operations in a Systems Manual. Keeping this manual up-to-date, as well as the checking on proper compliance with it, including by internal audits, also demanded a lot of time from our staff in 2014. Details about quality and current food safety certificates can be found on the website [www.veilinghoogstraten.be](http://www.veilinghoogstraten.be).

### SOME QUALITY DETAILS IN FIGURES (2014)

ACTION (numbers/ product)	PRODUCT						
	Tomatoes bunch	Tomatoes loose	Sweet peepers	Cucum- bers	Straw- berries	other	total
inspection records	15.276	22.116	21.848	1.661	65.224	6.199	132.324
inspection remarks	500	95	494	4	2.260	21	3.374
subsequent checks	270	135	354	6	3.481	3	4.249
shelf-life	158	72	527	4	5.640	6	6.407
internal audits	23						

*Our focus is on  
quality, freshness  
and food safety*

## SERVICES

### PROVIDING TAILOR-MADE SERVICES

Veiling Hoogstraten provides an extensive package of services tailor-made for both its members and customers. The producers and the product are central, with a strong focus on quality, freshness and food safety. Besides the actual handling of the products, Veiling Hoogstraten takes care of the development of a quality policy and for conducting communications. Furthermore, technical and logistical support is provided, such as with the storing of strawberry plants or the starting up of the cold (supply) chain.

## PRODUCTS AND BRANDS

### STRONG AS A RESULT OF SPECIALISATION

Veiling Hoogstraten only distributes vegetables and fruit that meet the strictest quality requirements. Strawberries comprise almost 50% of the product turnover (2014: € 90 million) and are thus a top product for the auction. Since 2014, strawberries have been grown all year round with a constantly high quality and taste for the entire year.

Together with the Hoogstraten® strawberry, the Flandria tomato is on top at Veiling Hoogstraten. In 2005, the standard range of tomatoes was expanded with new surprising products - specialities. The demand was clear: healthy snacks. The specialities fit perfectly in this modern eating trend and the supply has only increased since then. Specialities now comprise almost 35% of the tomato turnover (total turnover of tomatoes in 2014: € 69 million) and are put onto the market fully customer-oriented.

The Flandria sweet peppers are in third place in terms of turnover (2014: € 29 million). More than half the volume of sweet peppers at Veiling Hoogstraten originates from the Netherlands. During the last 10 years, the auction has invested heavily in a new warehouse with an advanced computerised sorting system. Growers can have their sweet peppers sorted centrally at a competitive rate. Thus the grower can focus on cultivation and save costs. Cucumbers, kiwi fruit and small products provide the final 3% of the turnover. Kiwi fruit is a good example of innovation and at the same time a healthy snack from our own soil.



Our brands.

## TRANSPARENT SELLING SYSTEM

### DIRECT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN DEMAND AND SUPPLY

#### CLOCK SELLING AND MEDIATION

The clock, supplemented by mediation, remains the most important selling instrument and is the symbol for a transparent and market-level price in which the direct confrontation between demand and supply determines the price. The choice of a specific selling technique also depends on the nature of the product: strawberries react very quickly to weather conditions and are therefore best served with a daily sale via the clock. Vegetables often involve large volumes with which the clients want to cover their requirements by means of a fixed price, selling the remaining portion on a daily basis via the clock.

All the products are inspected on size, weight and packaging and are divided into batches of uniform quality. Together with similar products from the other Flemish auctions, they are offered via a simultaneous clock sale. Each buyer that is at one of the Flemish auctions has the opportunity to buy the product from every auction. This system has existed since 1982 and is unique in the world. Some years ago the system was expanded with a home selling system. This enables the buyers to participate in the sales online from their own offices. To guide this process and adjust it, there is frequent consultation with the participating auctions.

The ultimate goal is to sell the entire production at the best possible price from the market. The



# STRAWBERRIES WITH A FACE

CUSTOMERS LEARN TO KNOW THE PRODUCERS OF HOOGST RATEN® STRAWBERRIES



Customers want to know the origin and quality assurance of their fresh products. Therefore, in 2009 Veiling Hoogstraten launched the 'Strawberries with a face' project. Anyone who buys a punnet of strawberries, via a unique code and special web page can learn who the producer is. They can even leave a little message for the producer. Our guarantee for fresh and high-quality products: briefly, the transparency that suits an honest product. As a result of the many positive reactions, we have also launched this project for kiwi fruit. We are now making full plans to expand it further to vegetables.

...as long as our customers are happy!



selling has various forms: the clock remains central at Veiling Hoogstraten, for strawberries it is the only selling instrument in addition to e-mediation. Besides the clock selling there is also mediation selling or futures selling.

## PRESALES

In 2009, Veiling Hoogstraten launched the system of presales with full trucks for tomatoes. A unique system in which buyers can buy a product in a specific packaging via the clock a day before loading. The following day the product can then be inspected and loaded immediately at the grower. The customer chooses the packaging required and is moreover certain of a specific volume. This enables the logistics organisation of Veiling Hoogstraten and the growers involved to be substantially lightened. This also reduces the time between the harvesting and the selling in the shop. This is only better for the quality and freshness of the tomatoes. A win-win situation that will also be further expanded in the future.

## SALES MARKET: ACROSS THE BORDERS

The customers of Veiling Hoogstraten consist of major Belgian and Dutch exporters, wholesalers and supermarkets. These extend from one-man businesses and SMEs to multinationals, all from one and the same sector: the vegetables and fruit business. Products from Veiling Hoogstraten depart to the whole of Europe and sometimes even beyond. France and Scandinavia are important export destinations for the Hoogstraten® strawberries. Germany and Eastern Europe are also important for the vegetables.

The sales in Belgium are also very important. Year on year it is attempted to increase the local sales by a properly supported promotion and communications campaign for the brands Flandria, Hoogstraten® and Specialty Street. Veiling Hoogstraten supports supermarkets with a thorough analysis of the range and with campaigns on the shop floor. There are also attempts to expand the sales market by focusing on new customers. In this way, a number of years ago, Veiling Hoogstraten added the Middle East as a new destination.

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Satisfaction of our customers is a significant issue. At Veiling Hoogstraten we take all complaints seriously and collect these in a database; remarks concerning product quality are also recorded in the system as complaints. This structuring enables complaints from customers to be received, recorded and evaluated so that:

- the customer receives a proper answer;
- repetition of the complaint is prevented and the policy, where possible, is adjusted.

The Product & Quality department is responsible for the processing of product complains; the other complaints are handled each week during the management meeting. The Communications department provides communications to consumers.

The most common complaints are product complaints, but these are not an indicator for customer satisfaction. The quality of vegetables and fruit depends particularly heavily on external factors, such as the weather, for example, but also the handling of the product after delivery by the auction.

In addition, Veiling Hoogstraten operates at the request of specific customers with regular company visits to provide their employees with the necessary product knowledge. This enables them to see, smell, feel and taste the products combined with an expert explanation. This enables them to receive an overall view of the product and more insight into the origin of the product, which can only be beneficial for the marketing.

## PARTNERSHIPS

## TOGETHER TO THE MARKET

The most important aim of Veiling Hoogstraten is to bring safe and healthy food to the market, the supply concentration and the selling of vegetables and fruit in the interest of its members. To fulfil its goals as best possible, the auction has already been cooperating for many years with other organisations in Belgium and the Netherlands:

- The Association of Belgian Horticultural Cooperatives (Verbond van Belgische Tuinbouw-coöperaties - VBT) defends the interests of the sector.
- The Administrative and Logistic Association of Auctions (Logistieke en Administratieve Veiling-associatie - Lava) is responsible for full quality control and future selling of vegetables and fruit.
- The Research Centre Hoogstraten (Proefcentrum Hoogstraten - PCH) is responsible for applied research in the main crops.
- In the context of product mergers, there are also partnerships with other auctions:
  - CLTV Zundert (the Netherlands)
  - Bel'Orta in Sint-Katelijne-Waver
  - REO auction in Roeselare
  - Veiling Zaltbommel (the Netherlands)
  - Fruitveiling Zuid-Limburg/Margraten (the Netherlands)

## OUR ECONOMIC GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

- Continue positioning our brands Hoogstraten®, Flandria and Specialty Street in the market.
- Exploring and attracting new markets by means of participation in various trade fairs and prospecting trips.
- Implementing adjustments to the infrastructure to improve the product.
- Implementing cost efficiency without losing sight of quality and service provision in this context.

These goals are evaluated annually at a specially organised management meeting.

## 2014: A RECORD YEAR FOR VEILING HOOGST RATEN

### HIGH VOLUMES AND YEAR-ROUND PRODUCTION

Veiling Hoogstraten closed 2014 with a product turnover of € 193 million, i.e. 10.5% higher than in 2013 (€ 174 million). A new record was established both in terms of turnover and volume (150,000 tonnes). The volume increase is both the result of expansions at existing growers and from an influx of new - mainly Dutch - growers, the latter mainly with sweet peppers.

As a result of the limited product range, the turnover was created for 50% by strawberries and a limited proportion of small fruits, including blueberries and kiwi fruit; the other 50% consisted of vegetables, mainly tomatoes and sweet peppers. As far as tomatoes are concerned, the auction saw continued growth and switching to specialities in 2014. This trend will also be continued more intensively in 2015.

Strawberries made a good average annual price and tomatoes a reasonable one; sweet peppers and cucumbers clearly scored significantly worse in 2014. Spring was characterised by summery weather with early production and weak pricings, which meant that at the beginning of the summer we were looking at substantially lower average prices. The summer was Belgian, cool and wet, which caused the absence of production peaks and better pricing - especially for strawberries and tomatoes. May and June were still good months for sweet peppers, after which they no longer did well. Despite a Russian boycott against EU vegetables and fruit at the start of August, autumn was generally good for tomatoes; also, the low prices feared for the strawberries - as a result of increasing volumes - did not materialise and it was one of the best autumns for a long time. The final result for our auction can certainly be said to be atypical in a year in which less good results were realised on average.

We also hope to be able to continue this positive trend in 2015 at Veiling Hoogstraten. To this end, more efforts will include attracting experienced staff, in-depth investment in infrastructure, exploring the market, direct communications with producers and customers, and the continued development of our own identity.

## STATISTICAL ANNUAL SUMMARY 2012 - 2014

*veiling Hoogstraten had a  
turnover increase of 10.5% compared to 2013*

This table shows the most important products marketed by Veiling Hoogstraten for the period from 2012 to 2014 with their supply, turnover and price.

as at 31 dec. 2014	SUPPLY (kg/unit)				
	2012	2013	2014	vs. '12	vs. '13
<b>Strawberries</b>	30.587.218	29.031.717	30.359.969	99,3%	104,6%
Tomatoes loose	10.104.137	12.292.173	12.835.785	127,0%	104,4%
Tomatoes (bunch)	52.387.972	57.305.684	53.697.389	102,5%	93,7%
Tomatoes specialities	5.390.410	8.231.607	12.428.376	230,6%	151,0%
<b>Total tomatoes</b>	<b>68.726.738</b>	<b>78.492.759</b>	<b>80.297.024</b>	<b>116,8%</b>	<b>102,3%</b>
Sweet peppers red	10.664.962	9.130.913	14.871.650	139,4%	162,9%
Sweet peppers green	6.271.567	8.906.437	9.058.391	144,4%	101,7%
Sweet peppers yellow	3.304.481	2.703.901	3.627.756	109,8%	134,2%
Sweet peppers orange	979.147	1.180.436	1.312.411	134,0%	111,2%
Sweet peppers specialities	41.812	48.793	49.689	118,8%	101,8%
<b>Total sweet peppers</b>	<b>21.218.557</b>	<b>21.834.748</b>	<b>28.867.636</b>	<b>136,0%</b>	<b>132,2%</b>
<b>Cucumbers</b>	<b>6.979.663</b>	<b>7.551.775</b>	<b>7.238.020</b>	<b>103,7%</b>	<b>95,8%</b>
<b>Asparagus</b>	<b>40.384</b>	<b>49.112</b>	<b>103.598</b>	<b>256,5%</b>	<b>210,9%</b>
<b>Courgettes</b>	<b>3.058.602</b>	<b>2.059.364</b>	<b>2.695.718</b>	<b>88,1%</b>	<b>130,9%</b>
<b>Gherkins</b>	<b>43.835</b>	<b>56.795</b>	<b>34.465</b>	<b>78,6%</b>	<b>60,7%</b>
<b>Cauliflowers</b>	<b>29.158</b>	<b>22.726</b>	<b>12.206</b>	<b>41,9%</b>	<b>53,7%</b>
<b>Raspberries</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>1.652</b>	<b>6.095</b>	<b>1288,6%</b>	<b>368,9%</b>
<b>Radishes</b>	<b>154.140</b>	<b>149.409</b>	<b>146.265</b>	<b>94,9%</b>	<b>97,9%</b>
<b>Broccoli</b>	<b>11.438</b>	<b>47.862</b>	<b>21.727</b>	<b>190,0%</b>	<b>45,4%</b>
<b>Berries</b>	<b>11.871</b>	<b>11.078</b>	<b>11.249</b>	<b>94,8%</b>	<b>101,5%</b>
<b>Kiwi fruit</b>	<b>30.310</b>	<b>53.849</b>	<b>69.743</b>	<b>230,1%</b>	<b>129,5%</b>
<b>Apples</b>	<b>894.195</b>	<b>566.510</b>	<b>711.835</b>	<b>79,6%</b>	<b>125,7%</b>

2012	2013	2014	vs. 2012	vs. 2013
164.341.682,68	174.728.396,81	192.715.240,44	117,3%	110,3%



TURNOVER (€)					AVERAGE PRICE (€/kg/unit)		
2012	2013	2014	vs. '12	vs. '13	2012	2013	2014
78.802.567	85.319.667	90.175.539	114,4%	105,7%	2,58	2,94	2,97
7.541.363	6.868.217	8.080.008	107,1%	117,6%	0,75	0,56	0,63
36.935.208	29.742.232	34.117.783	92,4%	114,7%	0,71	0,52	0,64
10.952.990	15.308.504	23.023.214	210,2%	150,4%	2,03	1,86	1,85
57.953.651	54.085.983	68.898.341	118,9%	127,4%	0,84	0,69	0,86
12.138.183	12.973.773	15.415.652	127,0%	118,8%	1,14	1,42	1,04
6.427.158	10.174.090	8.448.825	131,5%	83,0%	1,02	1,14	0,93
3.492.715	4.168.047	3.436.803	98,4%	82,5%	1,06	1,54	0,95
1.277.014	1.679.535	1.448.348	113,4%	86,2%	1,30	1,42	1,10
215.559	259.675	248.055	115,1%	95,5%	5,16	5,32	4,99
23.335.071	28.983.119	28.736.040	123,1%	99,1%	1,10	1,33	1,00
1.890.902	2.312.583	1.659.576	87,8%	71,8%	0,27	0,31	0,23
258.572	402.531	583.895	225,8%	145,1%	6,40	8,20	5,64
813.340	608.943	822.568	101,1%	135,1%	0,27	0,30	0,31
54.420	60.034	44.426	81,6%	74,0%	1,24	1,06	1,29
24.381	21.480	7.222	29,6%	33,6%	0,84	0,95	0,59
1.910	9.842	36.840	1928,4%	374,3%	4,04	5,96	6,04
72.348	75.884	68.976	95,3%	90,9%	0,47	0,51	0,47
8.424	31.144	11.902	141,3%	38,2%	0,74	0,65	0,55
98.137	129.463	92.188	93,9%	71,2%	8,27	11,69	8,20
291.190	424.029	590.850	202,9%	139,3%	9,61	7,87	8,47
223.321	145.083	121.708	54,5%	83,9%	0,25	0,26	0,17



# Special recognitions

Veiling Hoogstraten aims to minimize the possible negative effects of its activities on the community and the environment. To this end, we are always prepared to enter into discussions with our stakeholders in order to continue improving our CSR thinking and actions and to formulate goals.

## CSR CHARTER PARTICIPATION

### A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

On 16 June 2014, Veiling Hoogstraten received the CSR Charter for the second time. This is a project of the Chambers of Commerce of Kempen and Mechelen and the province of Antwerp. The charter encourages companies to plan and implement CSR and environmentally-related actions that go further than what is legally imposed.

With this charter, the auction provides specific form to its social involvement and commits to include sustainable entrepreneurship in its strategy and operation. The signing of the charter means that a company undertakes to work proactively on a number of themes of Corporate Social Responsibility. The efforts are assessed by an independent team of experts.

The auction scored this time with 7 environmental action points, 4 people-oriented and 4 socially oriented actions. Veiling Hoogstraten has also committed itself to a new 2014 to 2015 cycle.

More information about the social policy of Veiling Hoogstraten can be found in the CSR policy statement in the appendix.



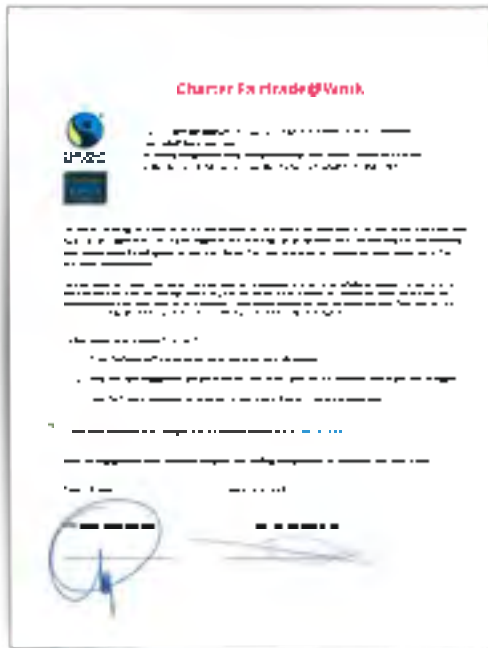
As a cherry on the cake, in June 2014 veiling Hoogstraten was able to receive the CSR certificate for the second time.

## THE HAVELAAR

### FAIRTRADE@WORK

Fairtrade@work aims for the day-to-day consumption of Fairtrade products in the workplace. To draw attention to this, 'the Havelaar' was launched in 2011. This is recognition for companies and organizations that use Fairtrade products on a daily basis. The Havelaar is awarded with one, two or three stars, which indicate how far the organisation goes in its Fairtrade commitment. Thus a system in which there is room for growth and with which strongly engaged employers can be rewarded with a 'three star' recognition.

On Friday 14 November 2014, Veiling Hoogstraten was able to receive a Havelaar with one star. The auction had to meet a number of specific conditions for this. First, 100% Fairtrade coffee must be provided. In addition, a number of responsible people had to participate in an information session by Fairtrade Belgium. The organization had to set up an internal awareness campaign concerning Fairtrade consumption by means of various communication actions. Finally, a Fairtrade@Work charter had to be signed by a member of management, which showed that the Fairtrade commitment was explicitly supported by company's top management. Every two years, the auction must be able to demonstrate progress with specific evidence (proof of purchase, communications, etc.). Progress can be expressed in additional volume, extra products and extra opportunities at which Fairtrade products are consumed.



Lize van Dyck (Fairtrade Belgium) hands over the Havelaar to director Gaston Opdekamp



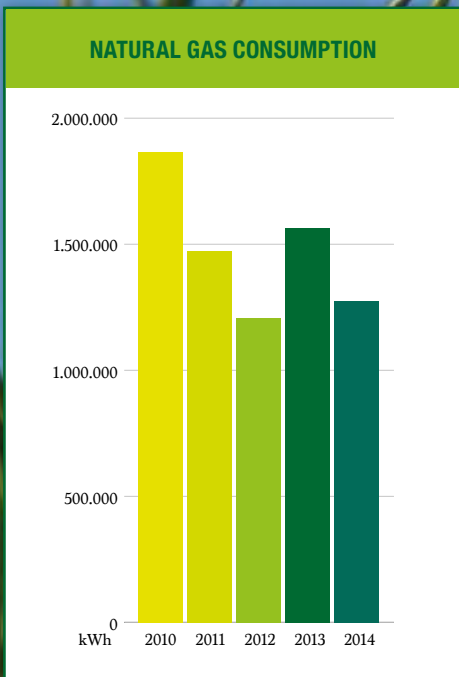
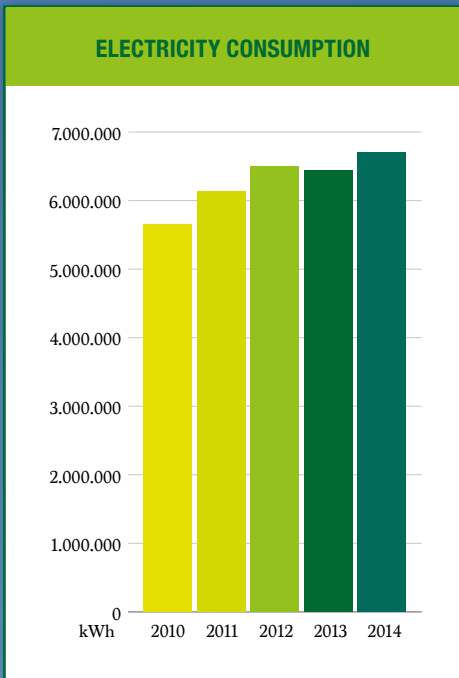
# Energy

## EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT, INVESTING IN RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY-SAVING MEASURES

As a result of the increasing energy consumption and global warming, responsible energy consumption and reduction of harmful emissions have become a significant challenge for companies in all industries. Veiling Hoogstraten wants its customers to receive its products fresh and full of quality, and these activities demand a lot of energy. Therefore, a conscious consumption of energy is absolutely essential. Numerous initiatives that are supported by Veiling Hoogstraten are responsible for the creation of sustainable energy or focus on the reduction of the energy requirements.

The first step for rational energy consumption is identifying the existing energy consumption. For the buildings, the consumption of water, gas and electricity is continually monitored. Last year, the auction consumed 6,700,442 kWh of electricity, a little more than in 2013 (6,446,714 kWh). This increase can partly be explained by the increase in the volume of traded product, an expansion of the cooling capacity and the introduction of precooling for the storage of strawberry plants. On the other hand, natural gas consumption decreased from 1,565,628 kWh to 1,274,917 kWh in 2014. This decrease is mainly attributable to better insulated spaces and a soft winter. The natural gas consumption at Veiling Hoogstraten has previously been limited (office heating, frost-free storage of products, and Euro Pool System crate washing).

In the future, Veiling Hoogstraten will continue making energy-saving actions, such as the annual tracing of compressed air leakages, the best possible use of lighting, raising awareness in its staff, etc.

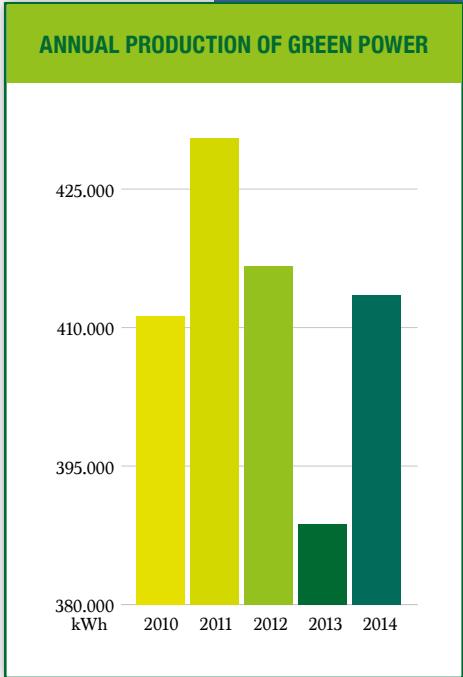


In 2011, 51 kWh electricity for each tonne of traded product was needed; in 2014, this was only 44 kWh, a decrease despite the introduction of precooling for the storage of strawberry plants.

# RENEWABLE ENERGY

## SOLAR PANELS PROVIDE GREEN ENERGY

Veiling Hoogstraten has been reducing its energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for many years. The auction deals responsibly with natural energy sources. Since 2009, 1,880 solar panels on four roof areas (3,500 m<sup>2</sup>) provide us with 408,000 kWh. This is equal to the average annual consumption of 120 households and a reduction of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 125 tonnes a year. The share of solar energy in the total electricity consumption of Veiling Hoogstraten amounts to around 7%. The installed capacity amounts to 432 kWp and the enclosed graphic shows the production of the last five years. Furthermore, the electricity consumed on the business sites has been 100% green in origin for a number of years.



## GOALS FOR 2015 – 2016

- Implementation of sustainable building techniques for new packaging warehouse: High insulation values, lighting, etc.
- Considerable expansion of the existing photovoltaic installation, which will increase the current capacity from some 425 kW to 1.1 MW.
- Continued focus on the greatest energy consumers and implementing optimisations via monthly reporting and monitoring.
- Study concerning relighting (solution for energy efficiency, light comfort and ease of maintenance).
- Making staff aware.

## EXTRA ENERGY-SAVING MEASURES

At the end of 2014, the lighting in the strawberry warehouse was replaced. The lighting in the space of 8,000 m<sup>2</sup> is now provided by 440 LED armatures that have replaced suspended bell-shaped armatures. The difference in energy consumption is considerable; more than 50%. Where the previously installed capacity was 56 kW, it is now 25 kW in the new situation. There is also the saving on cooling in the warehouse as well. Furthermore, the difference in useful life is just as impressive. Where the discharge lamps needed changing after some 10,000 hours, the LED works for an average of 50,000 hours – 5 times longer.

During the coming years, energy-saving measures will also be a standard part of our operational management. With the design of the new packaging warehouse, we have opted for sustainable building techniques, for example, increased level of insulation, light radiation on the north side, etc. The implementation of this new building project starts in 2015.

LED lighting works refreshingly in the auction warehouse and the difference in energy consumption is more than 50%.



Old bell-shaped armatures



New LED-lighting



Solar panels provide green energy

# 4

# Water



# Rational consumption

## DEALING EFFICIENTLY WITH A SCARCE RESOURCE

Water is an important natural element with which we must deal sparingly. Veiling Hoogstraten also deals with water with the greatest care and tries to make its staff aware of this in a correct manner.

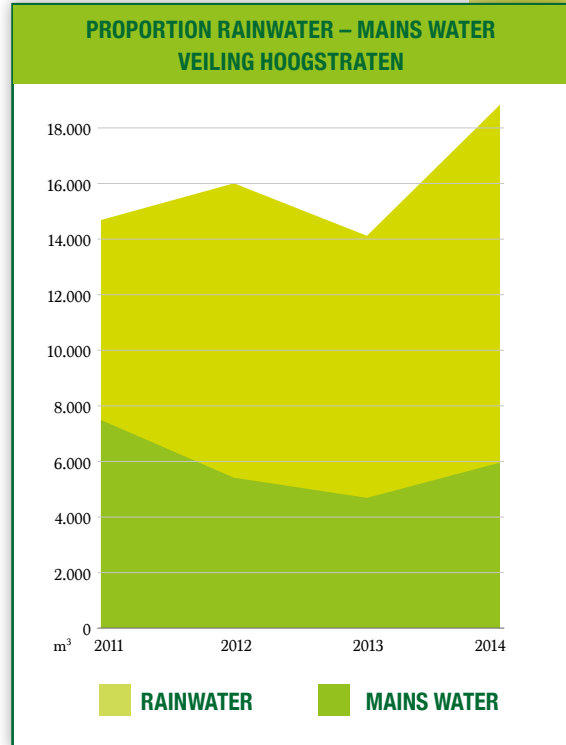
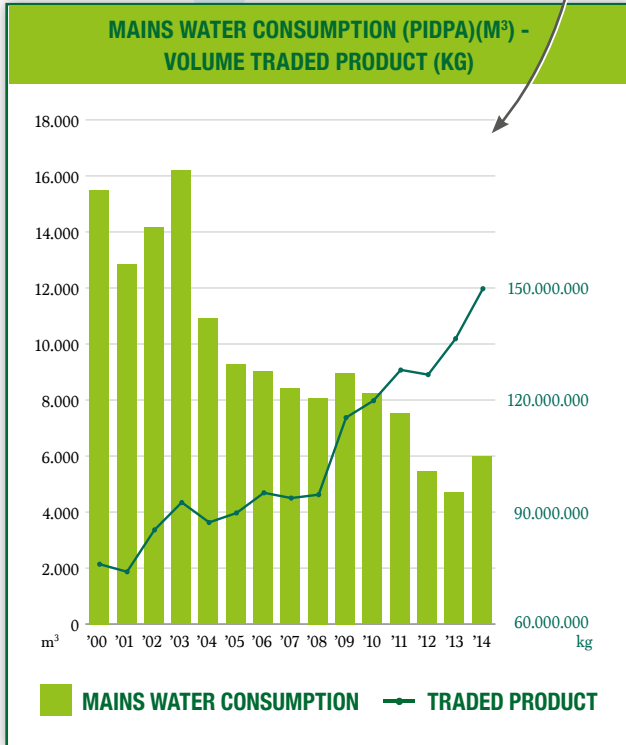
Veiling Hoogstraten uses water mainly for the cooling of products. There is also the household type of water consumption, such as the cleaning of buildings and sanitary use. The types of water that are consumed are mains water and rainwater. Rainwater is used where and whenever possible. Veiling Hoogstraten has specifically already been convinced for more than 10 years of the opportunities that rainwater offers. In its grounds and buildings, Veiling Hoogstraten has a large storage capacity for rainwater. In the building of a new offloading warehouse for vegetables in 2012, a water buffer was implemented with a capacity of 2 million litres of water for using rainwater in the cooling and air conditioning process. In 2012, Veiling Hoogstraten also implemented technical improvements in the water circuit. The installation of a 500-metre pipe has ensured that all the condensers can now operate using rainwater.

In 2014, the total mains water consumption increased by 19% (5,984 compared to 4,712 m<sup>3</sup>). This increase could be explained by the shortage of rainwater during specific periods of last year and by an increase of the volume of traded product in 2014. To enable tracing the development of the water consumption over various years, the consumption of mains water is compared to the volume of traded product. In 2000, 0.230 litres of mains water was consumed for each tonne of traded product; in 2014 this was only 0.037 litres. In 14 years' time, the mains water consumption of Veiling Hoogstraten decreased by more than half, mainly as a result of capturing rainwater, while the volume of traded product increased significantly. The table below shows an overview of the consumption of mains water from 2000 to the end of 2014.



The total capacity for capturing rainwater at Veiling Hoogstraten amounts to 4 million litres of water

In 10 years' time, the mains water consumption of Veiling Hoogstraten has decreased by more than half, mainly as a result of capturing rainwater.



The water that is used for water-cooled condensers preferably comes from the rainwater reservoirs, and mains water is used to supplement this. The various consumptions and the quantity of drainage that is discharged are recorded via the monitoring system of the cooling installation and noted by BWT (firm that performs the water handling).

#### PERIOD 12 DEC. 2013 TO 31 DEC. 2014

Rainwater consumption	12,936 m <sup>3</sup>
Drinking water consumption	913 m <sup>3</sup>
Discharge	3,588 m <sup>3</sup>
Evaporation	10,261 m <sup>3</sup>

The total rainwater capturing capacity within Veiling Hoogstraten currently amounts to 4 million litres. Of this, 3.6 million litres is intended for process water and 0.4 million for fire-extinguishing water. In 2011, the relationship between the consumption of mains water and rainwater at Veiling Hoogstraten was around 50/50. However, three years' later the proportion of rainwater has increased to almost 70%.

### GOALS FOR 2015 - 2016

- To increase the proportion of rainwater in the total water consumption of Veiling Hoogstraten to 75%.
- To make staff aware of dealing sparingly with water.
- Research into and use of sustainable facility (energy-saving buttons and economical high-pressure cleaners).

# 5 Waste management



## RADICAL WASTE SEPARATION

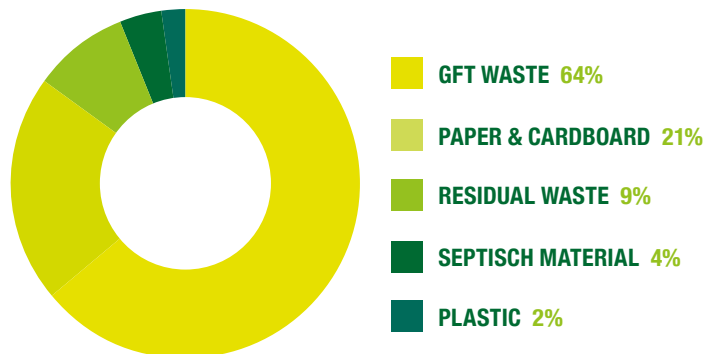
Veiling Hoogstraten outlines a structured and responsible waste policy. For this purpose, the auction has a closed private container park. All the waste flows are collected by specialised companies and, where possible, recycled.

For us, this is the basis of sustainability and respect for the environment. We ensure that we produce as little waste as possible and recycle as much as possible. This of course is accompanied by the necessary internal communications and awareness creation. Waste management is an issue for every employee with us. The most significant waste flows at Veiling Hoogstraten are **GFT (food and garden), paper and cardboard, and residual waste**.

The following waste flows are separated and collected:

- Paper en cardboard
- Residual waste
- GFT (food and garden)
- Plastic
- PMD (plastic, metal and drinks cartons)
- Metal
- Organic fraction
- Batteries and accumulators
- Wood
- Glass
- Small Hazardous Waste
- Septic material
- Toner waste
- Oil
- Discarded electrical and electronic equipment

VEILING HOOGSTRATEN'S MOST SIGNIFICANT RESIDUAL FLOWS IN 2014





*We ensure that we produce as little waste as possible and recycle as much as possible.*



The total quantity of waste increased from 1,772,545 kg in 2013 to 2,740,984 kg in 2014. This increase can mainly be explained by a considerable increase of the GFT (food and garden) waste. At 64%, GFT continues to be the most significant residual flow at Veiling Hoogstraten. 2014 was again a lesser year for sweet peppers and also for tomatoes during certain periods, which meant that large quantities of product excesses were valorised as animal food, fertiliser and a source of energy.

The total volume of residual waste decreased by 15% compared to 2013 (85,850 kg instead of 99,900 kg). To monitor the quantity of residual waste, the parameter “volume of residual waste per kilo of traded product” is used.

## **GOALS FOR 2015 - 2016**

Decrease the volume of residual waste by 10%. This will be achieved through various actions, including the better separation of residual, green, and PMD waste and a continued awareness creation among the staff.

*Our staff separate waste consciously.*



*The volume of residual waste per kilo of traded product has decreased over the last year.*

*In 2013, there was 0.70 grams of residual waste per kilo of traded product. In 2014, this was only 0.59 grams.*

## PACKAGING MATERIALS

Packaging is indispensable for storing our foods, transporting them safely, and selling them in appropriate portions. Veiling Hoogstraten supplies the necessary packaging according to the customer's requirements. The packing itself takes place at the production company or at the auction. Functionally, the packaging provides swift logistics and the necessary traceability. Packaging also guarantees the retention of quality of the fresh products in the trading channel. Moreover, wastage is prevented by providing portions that are adjusted to the family composition of the consumer. The environmental impact of a product thrown away is 3 to 100 times greater than the environmental impact of the packaging. Finally, the packaging is used to inform the consumer about the composition and the origin of the product and numerous other aspects.

This does not detract from the fact that the auction pays a lot of attention to waste prevention. The quantity of material is limited as much as possible and preference is given to reusable packaging and materials that can be recycled. Veiling Hoogstraten takes part in a three-yearly sectoral waste prevention plan that has been set up by the VBT (Association of Belgian Horticultural Auctions). The 2013 to 2016 plan provides insight into the importance of packaging for the selling cooperatives and the efforts implemented and planned to deal with this rationally and to prevent packaging waste to the extent possible. The sectoral plan is coordinated by the VBT and was submitted to the Interregional Packaging Commission in October 2013.

Commercial packaging is divided into transport and trading packaging and does not end up with the final consumer. Reusable packages are used as standard in an open pool system, such as multiple-use plastic crates and multiple-use pallets. Household packaging ultimately ends up with the consumer. Standardly, use is made of one-time packaging for this, mainly under the influence of market organisation and commercial elements.

COMMERCIAL PACKAGINGS ACCORDING TO TYPE  
ON THE FOREIGN MARKET



ONE-TIME PACKAGING 77%    REUSABLE PACKAGING 23%

COMMERCIAL PACKAGINGS ACCORDING TO TYPE  
ON THE BELGIAN MARKET



ONE-TIME PACKAGING 28%    REUSABLE PACKAGING 72%

*Thanks to the digitalising project, the paper consumption decreased by 7%. This is despite an increase in the volume of traded product.*

## GOALS FOR 2015 – 2016

Aiming for a lower impact with respect to packaging by opting for:

- Environmentally friendly packaging materials: strawberry punnet: FSC label, pallets: PEFC label.
- Lighter packaging.
- Types of packaging that achieve savings.

## NO UNNECESSARY PAPER CONSUMPTION

An important aspect in the reduction of paper consumption is the creation of awareness of our staff, which we do by encouraging recto-verso printing, among other things. Veiling Hoogstraten also makes sensible use of electronic communications systems to limit the use of paper within the auction: InfoWeb as communications platform to growers and buyers, electronic invoicing and meal vouchers, digital mailings, and the use of iPads during meetings. Moreover, since 2013 Veiling Hoogstraten has opted for paper made from sustainably produced wood.

To measure the development of the paper consumption, the number of sheets of paper per FTE (full-time equivalent) per day is calculated. With effect from 2014 this calculation has been based on the effective counting of deliveries and stocks. Before this, an estimate was only made on the basis of purchases. The consumption for 2013 amounted to 14 sheets/day/FTE. To decrease this consumption, in 2014 the digitalising project was launched. By specific actions, such as the introduction of digital invoicing, electronic meal vouchers and electronic mailings, the paper consumption decreased to 13 sheets/day/FTE, despite a substantial increase in the volume of traded product.

## GOALS FOR 2015 – 2016

Reduce the paper consumption by 5% compared to 2014 with the **administrative simplification** project.

- Upgrade digital communications by means of a new supply system.
- Project offices: double PC screens.
- Recto-verso printing and copying.

*A proper packaging ensures the retention of quality of the fresh products in the trading channel, and swift logistics.*





# Sustainable mobility

## AN EXPENSIVE BALANCE BETWEEN WORKPLACE AND ENVIRONMENT

With the supply and delivery of products, Veiling Hoogstraten pays attention to swift mobility. Account is taken of numerous factors to limit the nuisance as much as possible in the neighbourhood and on the grounds of Veiling Hoogstraten. In this context we consider, for example, the spreading of delivery times, presales of full trucks and even signposting on the company premises. Moreover, at virtually any time of the day - and night - customers can access the loading bays via secured access systems and pick up the purchased products.

### Project:

#### 'Minimising the noise nuisance'

From various consultations with local residents, however, it appears that they still regularly experience noise nuisance from the activities on our grounds. As a result of these complaints, in 2014 the 'Minimising of noise nuisance' project was launched. This project's intention is to orient the activities centrally on the grounds, as far as possible from the residential areas, and tackle specific problem areas with specific actions. In this context we are considering the rearrangement of specific loading bays, the installation of a barrier, adjusting the pallet trucks and closing off parking areas that cause nuisance.



### A GREENER FORK-LIFT TRUCK PARK = 100% ELECTRIC

Veiling Hoogstraten resolutely opts for electric forklift trucks for its internal transport. The benefit of using an electric forklift truck is that it emits no harmful emissions, which means the air quality is better for not only staff, but also producers and customers. Electric forklift trucks also cause less noise nuisance.

*100% electric*

## LEAVING THE CAR BEHIND

### MORE CYCLISTS = FEWER SICK EMPLOYEES

For commuting, Veiling Hoogstraten promotes alternatives to car traffic or the avoidance of car transport. With a bicycle allowance of € 0.20/km ridden, we want to show appreciation for the sustainable mobility behaviour of our staff. Everyone who comes to work on a bicycle for at least two-thirds of the year is entitled to this allowance. There are also showers, changing rooms and a covered bicycle shed available for them. Moreover, there are 15 bicycles available at the auction for movement around our own grounds. Nevertheless, we notice that we must make greater efforts in this context. Many employees still come to work in their own cars. Taking part in the national 'Car Free Day' is start in this.



### Project: 'Car Free Day'

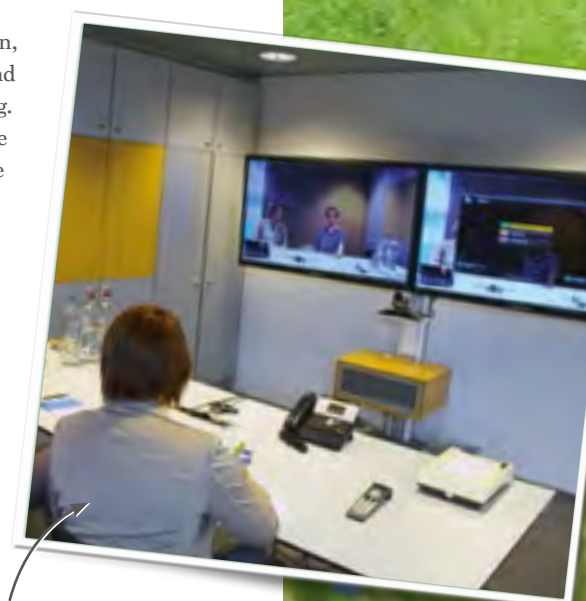
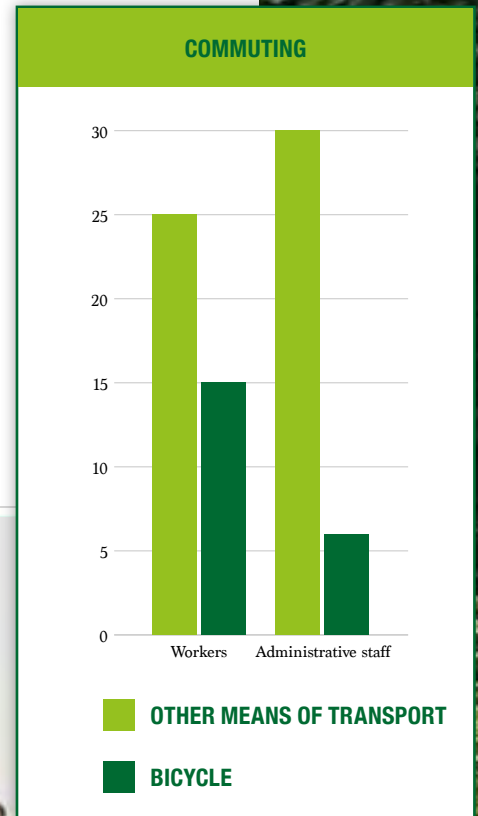
On Thursday 18 September 2014, Veiling Hoogstraten encouraged its staff to leave the car behind and opt for sustainable mobility. The weather gods smiled on the Car Free Day and very many of our colleagues accepted the challenge and came to work by bicycle or by means of carpooling. Veiling Hoogstraten had provided a nice surprise for all the people taking part. Each participant received a great drink container bearing the logo of Veiling Hoogstraten.

### VIDEO CONFERENCING = THE KEY TO GREENER MEETINGS

In 2011, in cooperation with the VBT and our fellow cooperatives, Veiling Hoogstraten, took a video/tele-conference system into use. Video conferences make use of audio and video telecommunications to bring people from various locations together for a meeting. This can be a discussion between two people in different offices or locations with more people in large rooms at various locations. Video conferencing can also be used for the exchange of documents. This modern meeting technique is one of the most effective ways to save not only costs and time, but also to provide a real and substantial contribution to the environment. The saving of kilometres on meetings leads directly and demonstrably to a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## GOALS FOR 2015 - 2016

- Replace promotion vehicle by a more ecological vehicle.
- Installation of electric charging pole on the grounds.
- Taking part in the Car Free Day again.
- Drawing up a traffic plan.
- Optimising the consultation with local residents.



*Video conferencing is the key to greener meetings*



# Adapted cooling

## HIGH-PERFORMANCE AND ADAPTED COOLING INFRASTRUCTURE ESSENTIAL IN FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SECTOR

Product cooling is absolutely essential, but also an expensive matter. Cooling at Veiling Hoogstraten makes up almost 70% of the energy costs, as it appears from a previously performed energy scan by Electrabel. After the products have been inspected, they must remain at the auction for a brief period. They are stored in places where there is an optimum temperature and relative humidity. Fruiting vegetables (tomatoes, cucumbers and sweet peppers) are pre-cooled at a temperature of 11 °C. Strawberries are stored at 100% relative humidity and 1.5 °C. The products remain briefly - maximum two days (during the weekend) - in the cold store. The entire cooling infrastructure of Veiling Hoogstraten is managed and monitored from 5 machine rooms that are managed from a central management system. An automatic notification of deviations and malfunctions and the presence of an emergency power supply with a capacity of 600 kVA guarantee the continuity of the operation.

## STORING STRAWBERRY PLANTS

Besides product cooling, Veiling Hoogstraten pays the greatest care to the central storage of strawberry plants (-1 °C). This is a kind of service for our producers. They do not need to invest in expensive cooling systems and can rely on thorough control. In an extensive refrigeration complex, the plants survive their winter hibernation with the goal of spreading the growth period. For this purpose, the auction has 24 cold stores of various sizes available.

The storage equipment is very modern, managed by computer and remotely controlled via the computer.

The most significant innovation in 2014 was the generalising of the pre-cooling. All the packaging, except the fruit boxes, was intensively cooled for two nights. The intention is to remove the initial warmth, which is still present in the plants, as quickly as possible so that a plant temperature between 0 and 1 °C is achieved. Besides a faster cooling down, this manner of working ensures that the storage units can work with a homogenous initial temperature for the various parties.



Digging up the strawberry plants for storage



Roughly estimated, this year 40 million plants were stored in the cold stores, good for 23 fully packed cold stores and 4 fridges for the precooling.





# Less impact, more future



## RESPONSIBLY FRESH

### PROGRESS CONCERNING PROSPERITY, WELL-BEING AND ENVIRONMENT

Responsibly Fresh is the sustainability label for the Belgian sector of fresh vegetables and fruit. The label is managed by the Association of Belgian Horticultural Cooperatives (Verbond van Belgische Tuinbouwcoöperaties - VBT), the sector organisation of the Belgian selling cooperatives. The aim is to develop the sector collectively in the direction of sustainability through continuous improvement. With Responsibly Fresh, the focus is on four themes that are relevant for the sector and in which there is room for improvement: low impact, biodiversity, proximity, and food thriftiness. As a cooperative, we operate on these themes via the CSR charter (see main section 2) in which we ourselves propose and implement specific action points. In addition, we guide our growers in their sustainable development by means of a collective file. This file shows where our growers are and what the operating points are for the coming years. The collective aspect is very important to this, with which not only the leaders, but also the followers move towards sustainable development. From a chain approach around sustainability it is thus also clear to what our sector commits itself.

For the collective file, 49 sustainability criteria are elaborated in a questionnaire. At the start of 2014, 285 Veiling Hoogstraten producers (100%) stated their achieved and planned measures via the questionnaire (in total 2,848 producers of the various VBT auctions). At the producers, the results for each theme are strongly determined by the company situation and in particular the type of crop. Thus, for example, the energy consumption is usually higher for protected crops of vegetable and fruit in comparison with open air crops. Some efforts of our growers:

### ENERGY

- Almost a third of our producers (29%) produce renewable energy themselves, mainly by means of solar panels (16%) and CHPs (combined heat and power systems) (13%).
- More than 55% record and evaluate their energy consumption.
- More than 70% take measures to limit their energy consumption. This can be done by installing energy screens, for example.

It appears from the collective file that during the coming years the producers will take additional steps for rational energy consumption. This requires proper recording to enable evaluation and adjustment.



Combined Heat and Power  
system (CHP)



Capturing rainwater



## WATER

- More than 75% of our producers take measures to limit the consumption of mains water and ground water, including by capturing rainwater, drain capture and drip irrigation systems.
- More than 75% record the water consumption, 65% also evaluate it.

There must be more efforts to record and evaluate the water consumption in the future. Only then can trends be followed up and measures taken.

## WASTE

- Limiting residual flows by means including: sending poor quality product to biogas plants (12%), using substrate of organic origin and implementing composting of biological waste at the company (44%).
- More than 60% of the producers make use of biodegradable business materials.

Uit de bevraging blijkt dat sorteren volgens fractie en een gescheiden afvoer van het bedrijfsafval de standaard is. Daarnaast worden er tal van extra inspanningen geleverd om de hoeveelheid afval op de bedrijven in te perken.



## INTEGRATED PEST CONTROL

- Based on three basic principles: prevention (67%), observation (82%) and intervention (92%). With intervention, priority is given to mechanical and biological control above chemical interventions.
- Diseases and plagues are prevented and/or suppressed with as little as possible damage to people, environment and useful organisms.

## SOCIAL FACTORS

- More than 85% take measures to improve the ergonomics (harvesting standing upright, automatic harvesting equipment, automatic stackers, etc.).
- More than 50% provide their staff with internal training and 10% external training.
- Since relaxing activities help to create a better working climate, around half of our producers invest in such activities.

Producers and Responsibly Fresh make efforts for the general well-being of their staff. Themes such as safety, health, training and infrastructure (eating and resting places, adapted sanitary facilities) are central to this.

## GOALS FOR 2015 – 2016

- Drawing up a new collective file (three-year plan) to show the development of the efforts of our producers.

Each product that carries the quality label comes from growers that want to work profitably with respect for people and the environment. In this way, everyone can enjoy top quality and transparency: today, tomorrow and in the future.

[www.responsibly-fresh.com](http://www.responsibly-fresh.com)

*To show the progress in the sector, in 2015 a new collective file will be drawn up by using a questionnaire to ask all the producers again.*



## BIODIVERSITY

### CONTRIBUTING TO THE QUALITY OF THE WORLD

The increasing impact of human activities has led to a never-before seen decrease in the diversity of genes, species and ecosystems. Species disappear today more than a thousand times faster than in the past millions of years. The causes are various (climate change, loss of habitat, etc.). Since companies often have grounds with relatively large areas, they can play a role in retaining the biodiversity. Both Veiling Hoogstraten and the producers contribute to retaining it. An example of an intervention on the grounds of Veiling Hoogstraten is the placing of a bee hotel with flowers. Our producers also take numerous measures with respect to the retention of biodiversity.

### BEE HOTEL IN GROUNDS OF VEILING HOOGST RATEN

The bee hotel in the grounds of Veiling Hoogstraten has been specially made for wild bees. These bees have difficulties because of the disappearance of places in the landscape where they can make their nests. Around the bee hotel, indigenous nectar plants have been planted in the entire verge. Wild bees ensure the pollination of very many flowers and crops and are therefore very important for our food production. If there are fewer bees, they can pollinate fewer crops and in the long term there will be less food. It is therefore important that the bees are saved before it is too late. The bee hotel provides a good solution. Moreover, with the associated information board, we also want to make our growers aware about the bee problem and in this way encourage them also to place bee hotels at their companies.



*Bee hotel in the grounds of veiling Hoogstraten*

### BIODIVERSITY AT THE PRODUCTION COMPANIES

Some examples:

- Application of integrated crop protection: Biodiversity is not only cleaner for the environment, but also cheaper; working in harmony with nature reduces the cost and improves the returns.
- Maintaining small landscape elements: wood and banks of ditches, etc.
- Implementing our company's own nature conservation plan.
- Sowing plot boundaries and/or maintaining the natural vegetation.
- Applying crop rotation (if applicable).
- Integration of the company in the surroundings and the landscape (green screens, adapted building materials and style, etc.).
- Use of bumblebees and bees.



9



# Our people



For Veiling Hoogstraten, the people are the driving force of the enterprise. They help manage the enterprise and its growth plans. Staff can provide ideas, express concerns and propose opportunities in informal and/or formal ways, for example during team meetings.

Significant spearheads in our staff policy are the reduction of absenteeism, investing in training and development of our staff and the creation of a culture in which everyone feels at home. Additionally, we also focus on future staff.

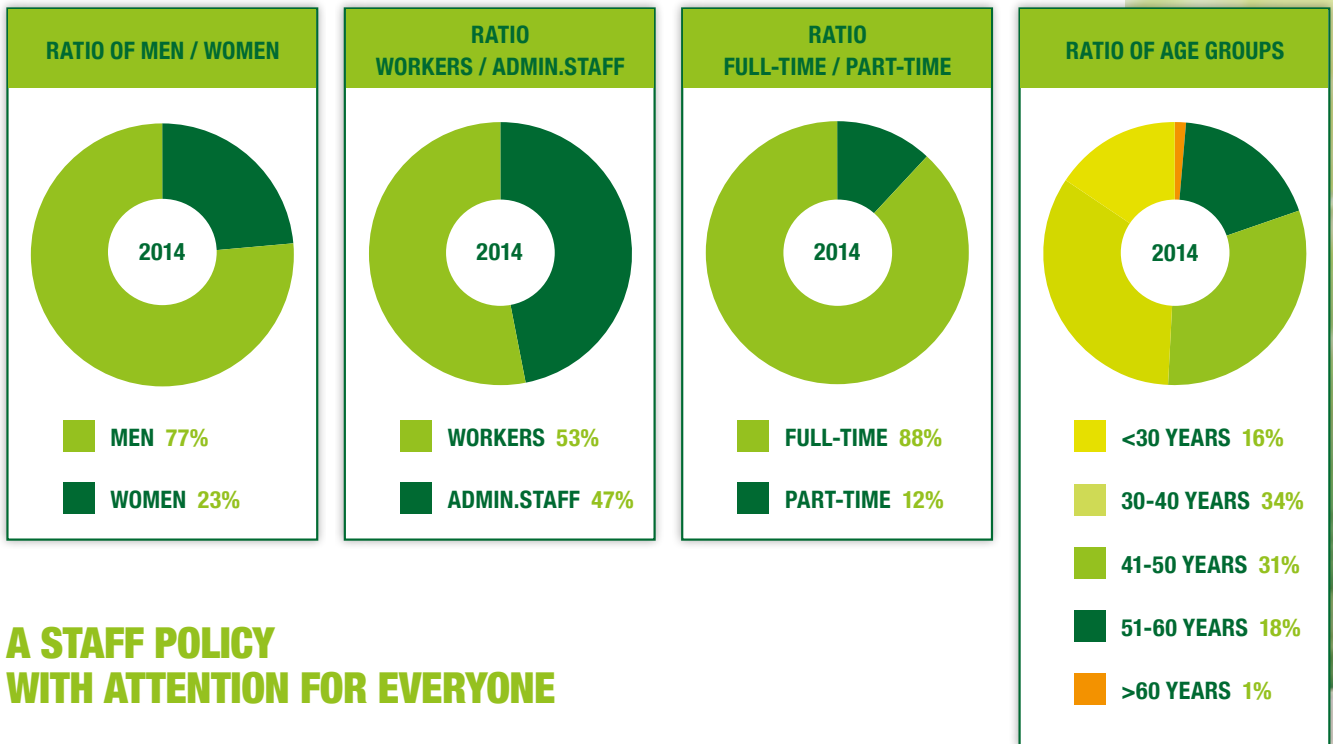
## A GROWING, STABLE AND MOTIVATED TEAM

On 31 December 2014, a total of 77 staff with differing cultures, of various ages and in very divergent positions were in permanent service. Veiling Hoogstraten employed an average of 66.3 full-time and 10.2 part-time people. This comes down to 73.7 FTEs. The average number of staff increased by 3.5% compared to 2013 (71.2 FTEs). 76.5% of them are men (59), 23.5% women (18). Inherent in the vegetable and fruit sector is that relatively few women work in it. Nevertheless, Veiling Hoogstraten aims for a diverse workforce with which it reflects the community. Young and experienced staff members form a good mix. Together with growers, the staff members have a broad experience in the area of vegetables and fruit. This knowledge relates to the cultivation, the product, the consumer and the logistics. This broad knowledge and the diversity of the workforce make the company an interesting employer. In 2014, we were able to welcome 5 new people.

The majority of staff (88%) work full-time; according to collective labour agreement (CLA) provisions, this is all staff with a contract for 38 hours. 9 staff members are in part-time service (12%), with contracts that vary between 19 and 32 hours. The breakdown between workers and administrative staff has remained reasonably constant throughout the years. 53% of the staff members have the status of worker. The number of FTEs (full-time equivalents) is the most objective parameter for monitoring the development of the workforce and measuring the growth potential. However, Veiling Hoogstraten is more than a collection of FTEs. The work pressure within a selling cooperative heavily depends on the supply of products and therefore on the time of the year. Therefore, whenever necessary, the team is expanded using temporary staff and job students. In this way, we can work flexibly to align the service provision perfectly to the needs of producers and customers.



Sietze van Ginkel



## A STAFF POLICY WITH ATTENTION FOR EVERYONE

Total number of staff leaving	2011	2012	2013	2014
Years of service 0 - 5 years		1		1
Years of service 6 - 15 years			1	1
Years of service 16 - 30 years	1		1	
Years of service 31 - 45 years	1			

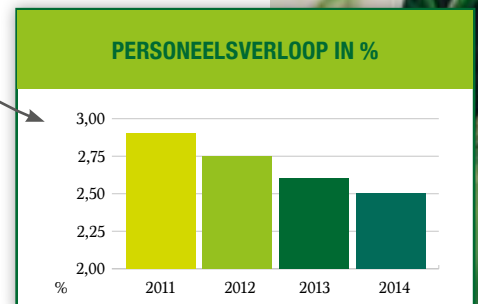
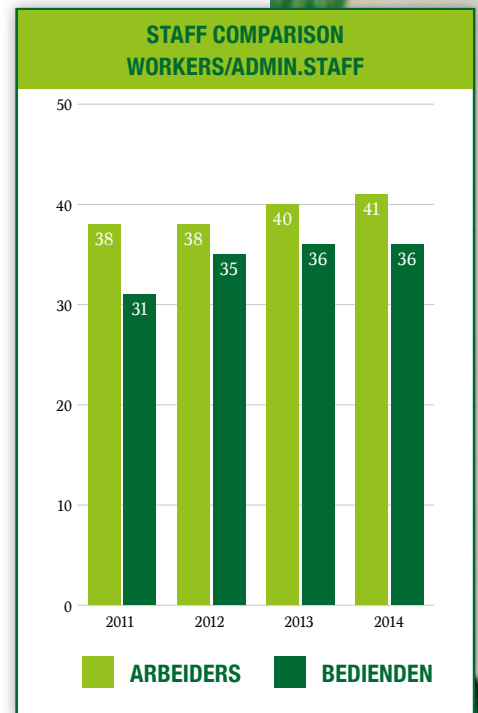
### STAFF TURNOVER

During recent years our workforce has grown gradually and we have a very low level of staff turnover. In 2014, two staff left the auction. The reasons for their departure were diverse.

### DEVELOPMENT OF TURNOVER RATE

The number of staff who no longer work with Veiling Hoogstraten, divided by the number of staff at the end of the year, provides the staff turnover.

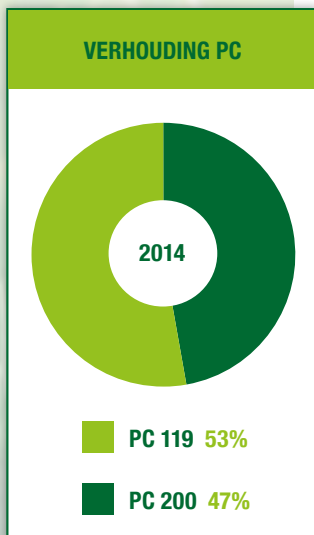
### NEW STAFF:



## DIVERSITY ON THE SHOP FLOOR

Diversity among the staff contributes to the auction being able to make the difference and can achieve the best results for stakeholders. We make no distinction in race, gender or age. All our staff must be able to use their qualities, talents, experiences and competences. It is mainly the distinctive qualities and talents that a person brings with them that mean someone is suitable for a specific job or position. This means that diversity is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve sustainable results for our organisation and the community as a whole.

All our staff members are covered by a collective labour agreement (CLA). In the CLA, the salary is determined on the basis of the classification of the position. Doing this means there is no demonstrable difference in salary between men and women. For management staff members there are two Joint Industrial Committees (paritaire comités - PCs): PC 200 (Admin. Staff) and PC 119 (Trade in foods). These contain pension and early retirement plans. Of the 77 staff, 53% fall under PC 119 and 47% under PC 200.

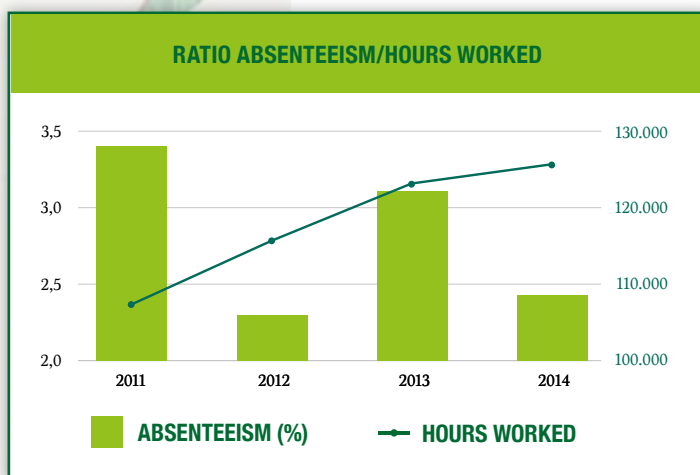


## AIMING FOR A HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Productive staff with proper health is essential for the constant success of an enterprise. Therefore we invest in our staff and we have an eye for a healthy and safe workplace. Sickness and accidents are unfortunately factors that also confront Veiling Hoogstraten. In 2014, the absentee rate amounted to 2.43%,

a decrease compared to 2013 (3.11%). This rate is based on short absenteeism; long absenteeism (more than 152 hours continuous absence) is not included in the calculation. An internal prevention department pays a lot of attention to preventing accidents. They are supported in this by a recognised prevention service for the medical monitoring and psychosocial supervision of our staff. Nevertheless, accidents cannot always be prevented. In 2014, 3 occupational accidents with temporary incapacity for work happened on the work floor.

In the measurement of the degree of seriousness we can see an increase, which means that the number of days of leave from work for each accident has increased. To be able to measure and compare the development of the occupational accidents, however, use is made of two indicators: the frequency level and the degree of seriousness. Not the number of staff, but the number of hours worked (exposure to the risk) is used for this.



	2012	2013	2014
absenteeism rate	2,30%	3,11%	2,43%
occupational accidents with incapacity for work	2	2	3
number of calendar days lost	13	2	105
hours worked	115.705	123.104	125.619
frequency level	17,29	16,25	23,88
degree of seriousness	0,112	0,016	0,835

We aim for an annual reduction compared to the total absenteeism rate of the previous year. In 2015 the aim is for an absenteeism rate of 2.30%.

## CARE FOR STAFF

The well-being of our staff is central, both on the work floor and beside it. The day-to-day commitment of the staff is always crucial for the success of the enterprise. At the end of 2013, at the instruction of the auction, IDEWE performed a psychosocial risk analysis. As some points for improvement emerged from this (need for clear communications, policy concerning guidance/coaching, formulating expectations, etc.), specific actions were elaborated in 2014.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Values such as respect, integrity and freedom are central to our corporate culture. We aim to give people the room to grow and develop, and to give form to their ideas and ambitions. This also means that people relatively quickly carry a large responsibility and that they will be expected to act and communicate confidently and proactively.

Because proper communications are essential for a proper operation, during an interactive presentation from Frederik Imbo our staff members were provided with insights and tips to speak smoothly with each other at times that things go badly. The workshop 'Why we have 2 ears and only 1 mouth' inspired everyone to communicate more efficiently throughout all the departments. Moreover, it was decided to provide the people in the team with production responsibility with a leadership development course, which gives them tools to communicate in a different manner. They do good work, but it is not always easy to stand between the situation on the auction floor and the management. Tailored from the specific needs, a course of several months was elaborated that further develops the leadership and communications skills for these people.

### WORK FRUIT, A NICE AND HEALTHY LITTLE EXTRA

Increasingly more companies give free pieces of fruit to their staff. Work and health can particularly perfectly be combined: by having fruit delivered at work, there is always fruit available and people opt more easily for this healthy snack. Veiling Hoogstraten also wanted to actively contribute to the health of its staff with effect from 2014 by offering fresh pieces of fruit each day. Fruit is the ideal snack at work, because, after all, it contains few calories, plenty of fibres, healthy sugars, vitamins and minerals. If employees eat fruit each day, they are fitter and healthier and they can therefore work with more pleasure. A healthy, refreshing break that positively influences the working atmosphere.

Veiling Hoogstraten wants to provide all the staff with the necessary support for the performance of their tasks and for their continued development. In this context, we also want to listen properly to the concerns of our staff.

## WHAT WE ENSURE?

- Structured consultation within Veiling Hoogstraten.
- Day-to-day management (weekly).
- Management consultation (weekly).
- Board of Directors (monthly).
- WHSC trade union consultation – social dialogue (monthly).
- Team meetings for each department (monthly).
- 2 information sessions with all staff members concerning strategic goals and procedures (annually).
- Staff involvement: various social activities.
- Appraisal interviews (annually).
- Eye for the health of staff.
- Safety plan + performing psychosocial risk analysis.
- Electrical fork-lift trucks, lifting machines and stackers.
- Ergonomic chairs.
- Medical examination.



*Cheerful faces during the interactive presentation from Frederik Imbo*





De ophoogmachine doet nu het zware werk

## REDUCING PHYSICAL STRAIN

By using preventive and corrective measures, we aim continuously to monitor and improve the ergonomics. Attention in this context is paid to the limiting of risks in the performance of various activities: Electric fork-lift trucks, adapted chairs, stackers, etc. The lifting of pallets, for example, was a straining activity some years ago. Now this task is performed using a lifting machine, which means there is no longer any strain for the staff. In the purchasing of new machines, fork-lift trucks and other equipment, additional attention is paid to safety and limiting the physical strain.

## SOCIAL DIALOGUE

A great deal of attention is also paid to the well-being and safety of the staff. On a monthly basis, Veiling Hoogstraten conducts consultations with the Workplace Health & Safety Committee (WHSC - Comité voor Preventie en Bescherming op de Werkplek - CPBW). During these meetings, staff members have a say concerning the policy. There they can exchange thoughts, have various ideas, but together seek solutions for problems. In this way, Veiling Hoogstraten can develop into a better environment, a more pleasant workplace, where people will not be sick, where people are safe, but where it is also pleasant to work.

Staff involvement	2011	2012	2013	2014
Percentage of the total workforce that attend the WHSC meetings	8,6%	9,6%	10,8%	10,4%

## DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OF PEOPLE

As a company it is important to continue to invest in staff. We support our staff by paying a lot of attention to training and personal development. In this context, we aim for a stimulating, creative working environment in which everyone can perform their job in the most efficient manner. Our staff members receive the opportunity to follow a wide offering of training courses. Training needs are determined via various channels, such as:

- A competence profile is determined for each position. Following this, training needs can be filled in.
- In appraisal and performance interviews, attention is paid to the need for, or interest in, additional training courses.
- Individual training plans can be refined further at the request of the staff.

The company's policy focuses on encouraging self-study for its staff as much as possible. The basic principle in this is that, in the first place, the study is focused on the discipline that is in line with the working area in which the staff member works in the company. Such training courses are virtually always approved. In addition, Veiling Hoogstraten attaches importance to the general development of its staff. Even if the training course is not entirely relevant, but the staff member would nevertheless like to take it, Veiling Hoogstraten often provides support for this. In 2014, a total of 1,813 hours of training were taken by our own staff. This comprised 1,494 hours for the male staff and 319 hours for the female staff. The large difference in training hours between men and women can be explained by 75% of the workforce consisting of men.



Veiling Hoogstraten invested € 113,969.50 in the training of its staff in 2014. The actual training cost amounted to € 1,480 for each staff member. To calculate the average training cost for each staff member, the following data were included:

- the costs of the internal instructor (net annual wage).
- the costs of the external training providers.

## GOALS FOR 2015 - 2016

- Introduction of performance interviews for all the workers.
- Increase the number of training hours for each staff member by 3%.



In 2014, veiling Hoogstraten invested € 113.969,50 in training for staff.



# Social commitment

## SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

It is the goal of Veiling Hoogstraten to contribute positively to the economic and social development of the community in which we operate. We aim to be an integral part of the community in which we operate by accepting our responsibility outside our walls.

### OUR COMMITMENT?

- Product sponsoring: promoting fresh products in the environment of Hoogstraten and surroundings.
- Making infrastructure (warehouses) available to the community:
  - Vegetables and flowers.
  - Musicals.
  - Local events.
- (Charity) benefit sales at the start of a new season, e.g. Kom op tegen Kanker, Vlaamse Alzheimerliga (Flemish Alzheimer league), Make-a-Wish.
- Participating in Zuiddag (South day): a unique project in which 10,000 committed young people between 15 and 25 years' old work for a day at a company, for which the wage they earn is paid to benefit a project in the South.
- Attention to education: during various company and school visits, the auction shows where its products come from.
- Internships: students are supervised in acquiring knowledge and skills, but more important is getting to know the vegetables and fruit sector.



Some students came to work with us in the context of Zuiddag (South day)



**THE CHARITY**

In 2014, the proceeds from the sale of the first strawberries were also fully donated to a charity. With a contribution from the auction, in the name of the strawberry growers, the proceeds were doubled and Make-a-Wish, an organisation that fulfils the wishes of children battling against a life-threatening disease, was able to receive a cheque for € 8,000. In this way, the wish of Heleen, whose dream was to go to New York, could be fulfilled.



*"The entire family, and Heleen in particular, enjoyed this trip!"*



*Schools can come and visit for a great guided tour*



*Product promotion*



# Our stakeholders

To enable trading as responsibly and sustainably as possible, we conduct dialogues with our stakeholders. The dialogues are conducted both ad-hoc and on a structured basis. A critical look from various standpoints ensures that we can take into account the wishes of our stakeholders. From the cooperative perspective, the joint aspect is also important. Together we commit ourselves to a more sustainable horticulture.

The main stakeholders are the parties who play an important role in the fresh supply chain and who have an effect on our products and method of trading. We therefore spend a lot of work on building up a good relationship with our stakeholders:

- We maintain an active dialogue with our staff via internal means of communication, staff meetings, the staff association and training days. There are also staff representatives in the WHSC.
- With growers in Belgium and abroad, we enter into discussions about steps that can be taken in making the cultivation sustainable, in the development of healthy and tasty products, and in the realisation of an efficient, sustainable supply chain. Responsibly Fresh forms the main guideline for this.
- We conduct discussions with customers about important subjects such as track & trace, transparency, the origin of the product, food safety, responsibly fresh, sustainable packaging and sustainable logistics. Our staff members have daily contact with customers.
- In the area of innovation, we cooperate closely with research centres and educational institutions.



The social subjects that suppliers, customers and deliverers consider important, moreover, are explained in this sustainability report. Stakeholders selected the general themes that touch on our operational activities. These are, for example, safe working, customer satisfaction, product quality and transparency.

Sustainability and corporate social responsibility and continuing to invest in the future: for Veiling Hoogstraten, these are important and continuing basic conditions that cannot work without each other. The realisation of this lies in the hands of the many staff members and partners, who are equal building blocks for the company. We communicate with our stakeholders in various ways, including via the annual report, local dialogue, consultation with the Hoogstraten town council, neighbourhood consultation, meetings, internal and external communication channels, and via various media channels.





# Appendix

## CSR POLICY STATEMENT OF VEILING HOOGSTRATEN

### INTRODUCTION

Veiling Hoogstraten considers Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to be an important part of sustainable growth. This means that the auction takes its responsibility in the supply chain by applying CSR in word, in creative proposals and with responsible behaviour. The “CSR Charter Proper Governance” fits in with the mission and the vision of the company and is supported by the management of Veiling Hoogstraten. This ensures an embedding of the CSR policy in all its departments.

The “MVO Charter Proper Governance” is applicable to all the activities and business processes in Veiling Hoogstraten. Veiling Hoogstraten aims to minimise the possible negative effects of its activities on the community and the environment. To this end, it is always prepared to enter into discussions with our stakeholders in order to continue improving the CSR thinking and actions and to formulate goals.

The CSR policy statement of Veiling Hoogstraten is endorsed by everyone who is part of the organisation. Management and staff members ensure that everyone makes the maximum effort from his or her position to respect and comply with the Corporate Social Responsibility and its allied aspects.

## CSR POLICY

### GOVERNANCE OF ORGANISATION

Veiling Hoogstraten wants to be recognised as a socially responsible enterprise. Proper governance of the organisation is the basis of CSR. The goal of Veiling Hoogstraten is to be transparent, to operate ethically, to respect its stakeholders and, where needed, involve them in its decision-making. Each process within Veiling Hoogstraten is managed so that the possible negative effect of it on the community and the environment is limited as much as possible.

Finally, Veiling Hoogstraten undertakes, in the context of its participation in the CSR charter, that it will continuously improve its performance in this area.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

Veiling Hoogstraten respects human rights, not only within its own organisation, but also within its entire sphere of influence. The code of conduct of Veiling Hoogstraten recognises the internationally proclaimed human rights and the effect that these have on labour participation. This code of conduct forbids, among other things, discrimination based on religion, age, gender, nationality, handicap or any other legally protected status.

## **SUSTAINABLE STAFF POLICY**

Health and safety at work are one of the top priorities within Veiling Hoogstraten. Measures are continuously taken to prevent accidents that can affect the integrity of people and their environment. The Workplace Health & Safety Committee (WHSC - comité voor Preventie en Bescherming op het werk - CPBW) formulates proposals concerning the policy with respect to the well-being of the employees in the performance of their work, concerning the overall prevention plan and the annual action plan drawn up by the employer. Moreover, Veiling Hoogstraten has a demonstrable operational policy with respect to the training and development of its staff. To safeguard the quality of the organisation, among other things, the staff members are encouraged to continue developing themselves and thus also the organisation by means of personal training programmes.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Veiling Hoogstraten acts according to the applicable laws and regulations in the area of the environment. There is aimed for, to the extent that this is technically and economically possible, to go even a step further than the prevailing laws and regulations to satisfy the goals of the Environment CSR charter of the Province of Antwerp.

## **DOING BUSINESS HONESTLY**

Veiling Hoogstraten and its employees will in no way whatsoever act in conflict with doing business honestly in all its facets. This principle is respected by compliance with the rules that promote and maintain its integrity and professionalism. The goal is to build up a good relationship with growers, customers and other relations. The relationship is based on trust, cooperation and sustainability.

## **CONSUMER INTERESTS**

Consumer interests, including health, safety and correct information, are respected within Veiling Hoogstraten. Shape is given to this by making an inventory of what effect our activities have on the environment and by preventing or minimising any negative effects. Any complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible according to a complaints procedure.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Veiling Hoogstraten aims for open and clear communications with its internal and external stakeholders. Where applicable, performance in the area of CSR will be made known.

## **SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT & DEVELOPMENT**

Veiling Hoogstraten accepts its responsibility for the community in which it operates, and will develop activities that positively contribute to the development of this community.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Veiling Hoogstraten respects the applicable laws and regulations and aims for a systematic improvement of its CSR performance.
2. Veiling Hoogstraten wants to be a responsible organisation by the balancing of our stakeholders' needs, the environmental effects, the people with whom and the community in which it works.
3. Veiling Hoogstraten takes the CSR principles into account in taking and implementing decisions.
4. Veiling Hoogstraten is aware that it has a direct effect on the environment and that a rational use of raw materials, natural resources and energy can reduce the strain on the environment.
5. Veiling Hoogstraten supports and respects the protection of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6. There is continually aimed for a working environment that is safe, healthy and pleasant, and in which no incidents occur in the area of environment, health and safety.
7. Veiling Hoogstraten and its employees will in no way whatsoever act in conflict with doing business honestly in all its facets. The key values are integrity, respect, transparency and openness with respect to the interests of growers, customers and the community.
8. Veiling Hoogstraten aims for open and clear communications concerning sustainability initiatives and reports in a transparent manner to stakeholders.
9. Veiling Hoogstraten listens to internal and external requests that arise concerning Corporate Social Responsibility.
10. The management closely monitors that the content of the CSR charter remains operational.

Veiling Hoogstraten aims for the continuous improvement of its CSR performance by means of the implementation of these principles in measurable CSR goals and control measures in the context of the CSR charter of the province of Antwerp.

### Date of policy statement: October 2012

The policy statement is only valid for a period of 3 years with effect from the date of the statement, and will be renewed before the current statement has expired.









# About *this report*

## LOCATION OF THE HEAD OFFICE OF THE ORGANISATION

Veiling Hoogstraten cvba  
Loenhoutseweg 59  
2320 Hoogstraten, Belgium

### ACCORDING TO GRI

In the preparation and drawing up of this sustainability report, we adhered to the guidelines of the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative). The indicators have been selected on the basis of their importance for Veiling Hoogstraten and its stakeholders. Companies can use these indicators as a starting point for changing their operation and making it sustainable, and immediately monitoring this and communicating about it. The extensive GRI table G4 containing the indicators can be found at the end of this report.

### REPORTING PERIOD

This report describes the activities and results that Veiling Hoogstraten achieved in the 2014 tax and calendar year.

### REPORTING CYCLE

The reporting cycle is set at an annual frequency and reporting concerns a calendar year.

### THE CONTENT OF THIS REPORT

In this report, we continue on the path taken with the previous report. This does not mean that we are not aware that there is still room for further improvement, for example, with respect to the substantiation of our materiality and its corresponding stakeholders' dialogue. In 2011, an initial effort was made by the management to elaborate systematic actions concerning corporate social responsibility. We opted for the system of the CSR charter. In this way, we aim to work in a structured manner towards achieving social and ecological goals. The horticultural sector is continually changing, not least in the area of sustainability. Veiling Hoogstraten considers it as its duty to play a pioneering role in this context. New action points are defined each year. Our stakeholders and growers can therefore count on continued efforts concerning corporate social responsibility.

To enable responsible and sustainable trading as much as possible, we enter into dialogue with our stakeholders. The many consultations with both internal and external stakeholders are of great added value for us as a cooperative. We opt for continuous consultation instead of a one-time stakeholder's meeting in the context of the sustainability report. By keeping our finger on the pulse of our stakeholders and what is going on in the area of sustainability, we can keep our action plan relevant. By together focusing on the economic, ecological and social effect of our activities, we can determine the material aspects for the auction. A critical look from various standpoints ensures that we can take into account the wishes of our stakeholders. In the selection, there is particular examination of which subjects most align with the core values and processes of Veiling Hoogstraten. In the various main sections we pay extensive attention to these.

This report is intended for everyone who is interested in the way in which we take our social responsibilities. In this context, we focus mainly on our business, administrative and social stakeholders. To determine all the stakeholders involved, Veiling Hoogstraten makes use of a stakeholders analysis based on the IQNet SR-10 system. Look at our stakeholders in main section 11. The application of this system is also embedded in our total vision concerning CSR and management consultation, and makes up part of the operation of the Hoogstraten CSR steering committee. It is also within this operational CSR steering committee that the determination of relevance takes place concerning subjects and prioritising. This sustainability reporting is further ensured by means of approval decisions from the management and the Board of Directors.

### **SEGMENTATION OF THE REPORT**

This second report according to the GRI guidelines is a comparison with the 2013 GRI report. Where possible, data from 2010, 2011 and 2012 have also been included to make developments clear. This report discusses the CSR approach of Veiling Hoogstraten as a cooperative, but it also deals with the efforts around sustainable development of the participants in Responsibly Fresh and the material aspects on which these can have an effect. Performance and data in the area of sustainability at the production companies have been gathered by means of the Responsibly Fresh surveys in 2013 to 2014.

### **REPORTING PROCESS**

Veiling Hoogstraten has an umbrella information system that monitors and records all the developments in the area of sustainability. Nevertheless, the sustainability report contains quantitative and qualitative information. Various departments have supplied information for this report. Each main section has its own internal main section manager, who is responsible for the content. Testimonies from customers, staff members and other stakeholders complete the figures in this report. The report texts are presented for checking to the editorial board, the main section managers and the management. After the report's publication, the entire process is evaluated.

### **MATERIAL ASPECTS**

This report handles the aspects that are most relevant for us in the context of sustainable development, called material aspects in the GRI guidelines. To enable the drawing up of a report that focuses on subjects that are essential to achieve the goals of Veiling Hoogstraten and manage our effect on the community, we have performed a materiality analysis. Material aspects reflect the economic, environmental and social effects of an organisation, or have a major effect on the assessments and decisions of stakeholders. As the first step in the assessment of material aspects, we have summarised the core processes of Veiling Hoogstraten. We have asked our stakeholders to identify and prioritise the possible effects of non-financial subjects on themselves and society. They were also asked to put forward and assess subjects that were originally included or entirely absent in our materiality analysis. No aspects were added.

### **MATERIALITY MATRIX OF VEILING HOOGST RATEN**

See following page.

### **PUBLICATION OF REPORT**

The publication of a transparent sustainability report is in keeping with our strategic goal to involve all the stakeholders in our operation. We want to keep our stakeholders regularly updated on our most important goals and results in the social, economic and ecological areas.

We have had this sustainability report printed in a limited number of copies. Our most important stakeholders receive a printed version; the PDF version can be downloaded from our website.

# MATERIALITY MATRIX OF VEILING HOOGSTRATEN

## Crop protection

Nutrients

Fertilising

Soil management

Nature conservation

Producers

## Food safety

## Economic performance

## Health & safety

## Energy

Training

Employment

Diversity & opportunities

Water consumption

Biodiversity

Waste and materials

Packaging

Joint  
interest

## Quality Assurance

## Relation management

Customer satisfaction

Complaint management

Social commitment

Mobility

Marketing & communications

Purchasing policy

Veiling  
Hoogstraten

*This drawing shows the interests of Producers and Veiling Hoogstraten*





## GRI G4.0 TABLE OF CONTENTS

This table includes the criteria from the G4 guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative. For each guideline is stated to what extent this is included in the sustainability report of Veiling Hoogstraten and where it can be found. References to the report take place on the basis of the table of contents.

### STANDARD INFORMATION PROVISION PART I: PROFILE

	description	reporting level	page
<b>STRATEGY AND ANALYSIS</b>			
G4-1	A statement from the managing director concerning the relevance of sustainable development for the organisation and its strategy ORG	Foreword	3
<b>ORGANISATION PROFILE</b>			
G4-2	Description of important effects, risks and opportunities	Company Profile	10
G4-3	Name of the organisation	Company Profile	8
G4-4	Most prominent brands, products and/or services	Company Profile	13
G4-5	Location of the organisation's headquarters	About This Report	50
G4-6	The number of countries in which the organisation operates	Company Profile	14
G4-7	Ownership structure and legal form	Company Profile	8
G4-8	Sales markets	Company Profile	14
G4-9	Size of the reporting organisation	About This Report	50
G4-10	Employees	Our People	36
G4-11	Percentage of employees covered by a collective labour agreements	Our People	36
G4-12	Description of the supply chain in which the organisation operates	Company Profile	11
G4-13	Any significant changes during the reporting period	Key moments of 2014	6
G4-14	Explanation of how the 'precautionary principle' is applied	Company Profile	10
G4-15	Overview of labels or charters that the organisation has	Quality Assurance CSR	12 18
<b>REPORT PARAMETERS</b>			
G4-16	Overview of organisations, initiatives or platforms of which the organisation is a member	Partnerships	15
G4-17	Area of application of the report	About This Report	50
G4-18	Description of creation of report	About This Report	50
G4-19	Overview of material aspects	About This Report	51
G4-20	Segmentation of material aspects within the organisation	Materiality Matrix	52
G4-21	Segmentation of material aspects outside the organisation	Materiality Matrix	52
G4-22	Explanation of the consequences of any reformulation of previously provided information	not applicable	
G4-23	Significant changes with respect to previous reporting periods concerning the scope and composition of aspects	Some sustainability results of producers have been included in the report (see Responsibly Fresh)	32
<b>STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT</b>			
G4-24	List of groups of stakeholders who are involved with the organisation	Our Stakeholders	44
G4-25	Basis for taking inventory and selection of stakeholders	About This Report	50
G4-26	Approach for the deployment of stakeholders, including the frequency of the deployment for each type and group of stakeholders and an indication of whether stakeholders are involved in the context of the preparation of the report	About This Report	50
G4-27	Main feedback from stakeholders and how the organisation has reacted to this	About This Report	50

## REPORT PROFILE

G4-28	Reporting period to which the information provided relates	About This Report	50
G4-29	Date of the most recent report	June 2015	
G4-30	Reporting cycle	About This Report	50
G4-31	Contact point for questions about the report	Colophon	58
G4-32	Level of report and reference to external verification	Core level + no external verification	
G4-33	Policy concerning external verification	No external verification	

## MANAGEMENT

G4-34	Description of the management structure of the organisation	Company Profile	8
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## ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

G4-56	Description of the values, (behavioural) standards and principles of the organisation	Principles of corporate governance CSR policy statement	10 46
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## STANDARD INFORMATION PROVISION PART II: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	description	reporting level	page
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### ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

EC1	Direct economic values that are generated and distributed	Company profile + financial report	15
EC4	Significant financial support from a government	Investments and subsidies	*
EC8	Significant indirect economic effects	Company Profile	10
EC2, EC3, EC5, EC6, EC7, EC9		No	

### ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

#### Energy

EN1	Total quantity of materials used by weight or volume	Afvalbeheer (gedeeltelijk)	24
EN2	Percentage of the materials used that consist of waste from external sources	Veiling Hoogstraten produces no physical products and therefore does not use materials from external sources; it does use packaging material.	26
EN3	Energy consumption within the organisation	Energy	20
EN6	Reducing energy consumption	Energy	21
EN7	Reduction in energy requirements of products and services	Energy	21

#### Water

EN8	Total water extraction for each source	Water consumption	22
EN10	Percentage and total volume of recycled and reused water	Water consumption	22

#### Biodiversity

EN12	Description of significant effects of activities, products and services on biodiversity in protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value outside protected areas	Less impact, more future	34
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#### Waste

EN23	Total weight of waste by type and removal method	Waste management	24
EN24	Total number and volume of significant discharges	Waste management	24

#### Compliance

EN29	Monetary value of significant fines and total number of non-monetary sanctions for non-compliance with environmental laws and regulations	None	
EN30	Significant environmental impact of transported goods and other goods and materials for the operation of the organisation and of staff travel	Mobility (partially)	
EN4, EN5, EN9, EN11, EN 13-EN22, EN 25-EN28, EN31-EN34		No	

\* see Financial report

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## SOCIAL: LABOUR PRACTICES AND DECENT WORK

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### Employment

LA1	Total workforce by type of work, labour agreement and region for each gender + staff turnover for each region, gender and labour agreement	Our People	36
LA3	Percentage that is again at work and retention after parental leave for each gender	100%	

### Relationship between employer and employee

LA5	Percentage of the total workforce that is represented in formal joint works councils and WHSC	Social dialogue	40
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### Health and safety

LA6	Injuries, occupational diseases, lost days, and absenteeism, and number of work-related fatalities for each region	Our People (partially)	38
LA7	Staff members with a high incidence or a high risk of occupational diseases	No occupational diseases known	
LA8	Subjects concerning health and safety that have been recorded in formal agreements with the trade union	Social dialogue	40

### Training and education

LA9	Average number of hours of training per year per employee, broken down by employee category and gender	Our People	40
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### Diversity and opportunities

LA12	Composition of governance bodies and breakdown of employees per category, according to gender, age group, social minority group membership	Our People	38
LA13	Ratio between basic salaries and remuneration of women compared to men for each employee category	Our People Diversity	38
LA2, LA4, LA10, LA11, LA14-LA16		No	

### Human Rights

HR3	Total number of cases of discrimination and the measures taken	1 incident of discrimination 3 interventions by counsellor 2014 Annual Report: Internal service prevention and protection at work	
HR1, HR2, HR4-HR12		No	

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## SOCIETY

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SO1	Percentage of activities in which local commitment is implemented and percentage of development programmes	Social commitment	42
SO2	Activities that have a significant actual and negative effect on the local community	Sustainable mobility Presales of full trucks	28 14
SO11	Aantal klachten over de impact op de samenleving gearhiveerd en opgelost door formele klachtenmechanismen	Customer satisfaction	14
SO3 - SO10		No	

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## PRODUCT RESPONSIBILITY

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PR1	Percentage of significant products and services for which the health and safety effects have been assessed for improvement	Quality Assurance	11
PR2	Lifecycle stages in which the effects of products and services for health and safety are assessed with a view to improvement and the percentage of important product and service categories that are subject to such procedures	Quality Assurance	11
PR3	Type of information concerning products and services that is required by procedures	Quality Assurance	11



PR5	Policy concerning customer satisfaction, including the results of surveys into customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction	14
PR7	Programmes for the compliance with laws, standards and voluntary codes concerning marketing communications, including advertisement, promotion and sponsoring	Food claims: in 2014, all means of communication were subject to a check concerning food claims; they were all adapted according to the law	
PR8	Total number of substantiated complaints regarding breaches of customer's privacy and the loss of customer data	No: to date, no complaints	
PR9	Monetary value of significant fines because of non-compliance with laws and regulations concerning the provision and use of products and services	None	
PR4-PR6		No	

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>GRI:</b>	Global Reporting Initiative
<b>CSR:</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>PAC:</b>	Product advice committee
<b>GM:</b>	General Meeting
<b>LAVA:</b>	Administrative and Logistic Association of Auctions (Logistieke en Administratieve Veilingassociatie - umbrella organisation of the most important vegetable and fruit auctions of Belgium)
<b>IFS:</b>	International Food Standard
<b>ACS:</b>	Gids Autocontrole (auto audit guide): contains requirements and recommendations concerning food safety and quality.
<b>QS:</b>	Qualität und Sicherheit (quality and safety): specifications with the main goal of guaranteeing food safety concerning hygiene and pesticide residues.
<b>GlobalGap:</b>	GlobalGap stands for the requirements set globally for agricultural and horticultural companies with respect to food safety, sustainability and quality.
<b>Vegaplan:</b>	System of food safety, quality control and traceability throughout the entire vegetable supply chain.
<b>RH:</b>	Relative humidity
<b>GCMS:</b>	Gas chromatography (multiresidue method)
<b>LCMS:</b>	Liquid chromatography (multiresidue method)
<b>KDT:</b>	Kenniscentrum voor Duurzame Tuinbouw (knowledge centre for sustainable horticulture)
<b>VTEC:</b>	Verocytotoxin-producing E.coli - bacteria
<b>VBT:</b>	Verbond van Belgische Tuinbouwcoöperaties (Association of Belgian Horticultural Cooperatives)
<b>PCH:</b>	Proefcentrum Hoogstraten (Research Centre Hoogstraten)
<b>kWh:</b>	Kilowatt hour
<b>kWp:</b>	Kilowatt peak
<b>PV system:</b>	Photovoltaic installation (solar panels)
<b>MW:</b>	Megawatt
<b>FTE:</b>	Full-time equivalent
<b>AGF:</b>	Vegetable and fruit sector
<b>kVA:</b>	Kilovolt ampere
<b>CHP:</b>	Combined Heat and Power or cogeneration system
<b>PC:</b>	Paritair comité (Joint Committee)
<b>WHSC:</b>	Workplace Health & Safety Committee (Comité voor preventie en bescherming op de werkplek - CPBW)



In 2015, Veiling Hoogstraten will also continue in its aiming for sustainable operational management. Thus there will again be signed up for a new cycle of the CSR charter and the progress in the sector in the area of sustainability will be confirmed by new data from a second producers' questionnaire.

In cooperation with producers, customers and suppliers, Veiling Hoogstraten will continue to work on making the supply chain of vegetables and fruit sustainable.

*We will continue to work for sustainability!*



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*Happily enjoy a delicious strawberry,  
sustainably produced, from veiling  
Hoogstraten while reading this report...*





This publication is printed on 100% recycled FSC certified paper and is printed using 100% vegetable ink. The paper pulp originates from sustainably managed forests.