

Biomarché unveils new facility

Biomarché, part of French organic group Pro Natura, opened its brand new facility at Nivelles at the start of October.

Founded in 1987 in Bossière, close to Sombreffe, Biomarché joined Pro Natura in September 2006.

This new storage facility – with 4,500sqm of refrigerated space, specialised equipment and optimised air-flow and temperature distribution systems – means Biomarché is the first fruit and vegetable supplier in the Benelux region to have a ripening room dedicated exclusively to organic bananas. The reception and packaging of overseas produce will also be carried out here.

The Nivelles site houses seven banana-ripening chambers with an 84-pallet capacity, using advanced ambient air-flow systems to result in greater colour consistency for fruit stacked on the same pallet, a technique especially useful for organic and Max Havelaar bananas.

The site also includes four refrigerated chambers with a storage capacity in excess of 500 pallets, providing optimum conditions with temperature control flexibility (from 10C to 12oC) to accommodate the different types of produce passing through the unit.

The facility has been created to meet the needs of an increasingly demanding and expanding market, with growth currently running at more than 15 per cent a year, and the depot's geographical location will enable Pro Natura to expand its produce distribution service in northern Europe. The Nivelles site will act as the northern springboard for overseas produce for Pro Natura, according to the company.

Biomarché will also develop new activities and create new jobs in the process. The firm has used the installation of the site to improve staff working conditions. By introducing lifting platforms in the packing shed, the company ensures that produce is always at the correct height for employees.

Biomarché's 50 staff process more than 15,000 pallets, or 13,000 tonnes, of organic produce a year, handled by nine processing lines in the packaging section.

Up to 40 per cent of the firm's supplies come from Belgian production sources when in season, and the rest from Pro Natura subsidiaries.

Major clients include Delhaize Le Lion, and retail and market garden outlets. Turnover stands at €16 million (£11m).

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The new Nivelles site