

# BLUE

Issue 2 | 2026



## **The Winner Takes it all**

Wouter Boerekamps about focus, courage, composure and team spirit.

*Floor & Esmee*

**“We just want one thing: to empower people.”**

## **Mark Knoben brings new energy**

**“All the ingredients are in place to take us to the next level.”**



## OFFICE IN 'S-HERTOGENBOSCH

Whilst we previously provided an in-depth look at our head office in Nederweert, in this edition we're also taking a look at the next step in Geris's development. The opening of our new branch in 's-Hertogenbosch has created additional space for further growth and collaboration. This location is the headquarters of Team Trade and Team Risk, whose colleagues are dedicated to managing international trade operations and building and maintaining relationships with customers and suppliers worldwide. It is a place that demonstrates how Geris continues to develop and invest in the future.

Would you like to find out more about Team Trade, Team Risk and the developments within this branch of Geris? Read the interview with Commercial Director Daan Dekkers on page 26.

### Colophon

This magazine has been compiled with care. No rights may be derived from its contents. The publisher and editorial team accept no liability for any inaccuracies, omissions or consequences arising from the use of the information contained in this publication.

### Geris Food Group

Nederweert: Platinastraat 30, 6031 TW  
's-Hertogenbosch: Koningsweg 101, 5211 BH  
The Netherlands  
[www.geris.nl](http://www.geris.nl)



**The charm of Italian cheese and partnerships**  
Mr Aiani on "La Familia as the foundation".

CO



**Artemis Milk Products**  
A logical addition to Geris Food Group

- 12 Geris's favourites**  
From coffee to sport, these are our favourites
- 14 I want to be challenged**  
Interview with Janina Schreurs
- 19 Geris updates**  
Growing, celebrating and moving forward together
- 20 DAAS (Again)**  
Explained
- 22 From good to great – Geris can make it happen**  
Floor Melssen and Esmee van Bakel know one thing for certain: we want to empower people
- 26 If you want to stay relevant, you need to look ahead**  
Daan Dekkers about the market

# CONTINENT

- 32 A visit to Meggle Cheese**  
Ayshe Lifka: the driving force behind long-term success
- 42 In conversation with**  
Frank van de Laar about Warehousing and Production
- 45 On the road again**  
A glimpse of life on the road with our drivers
- 46 Mark Knoben brings new energy to ZZA**  
Our ambition is clear. We are charting the course towards it, step by step
- 52 The winner takes it all - Wouter Boerekamps**  
About GP Elite, focus, courage and teamspirit
- 58 Wall of Memories**  
Some moments deserve to be framed

## FOREWORD

### Building together, looking ahead and, secretly, looking back too...

**Blue** is a magazine for our partners and for ourselves, so that we never forget where we came from – and so we can record a bit of our history – and, above all, to show where we're heading and how we're doing that together.

This edition is all about movement. Taking new steps and creating opportunities – in my view, the best thing there is! A fine example is the establishment of **Artemis Milk Products**. With this, we're adding a key link to our organisation and moving further back up the dairy supply chain to get even closer to the cow, thereby enabling us to serve our customers and suppliers even better. The closer we are to the source, the clearer everything becomes.

Of course, we're also looking ahead and building for the future through our new construction project. Work is really taking off, and the team at **Derdaele** is making great progress.

You can also read in this magazine about our partnership with **GP Elite** and our sponsorship of **Wouter Boerekamps**. A former intern who is now competing at the very top level as a professional in the **Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup**. I see many similarities between Geris and GP Elite; being and remaining a top racing team, just like us, depends primarily on people, teamwork and attention to detail. Sounds just like Team Geris.

We're also taking a brief to the past. Until recently, I'd never really been interested in this sort of thing, but to be honest, I'm turning 50 this year, and I think that's why I find myself looking back just that bit more often these days. The interview with **Ayshe Lifka** – a supplier from day one, a brilliant professional, for whom I have a lot of respect – is also a look back for me. Our relationship began more than 20 years ago, and I cherish it.

Other moments of reflection for me include the stories of our **Janina** and **Alberto**. Both have been involved with Geris from the very start. I'm very proud that we're still working together, and I hope to continue doing so with both of them for a long time to come.

Always looking ahead, whilst keeping half an eye on the rear-view mirror these days, I'd like to wish everyone a lovely summer holiday!



**Ziad Geris**  
Founder/Co-CEO  
Geris Food Group

TRUST, CRAFTSMANSHIP AND SOLIDARITY

# ITALIAN FINESSE BORN OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. Alberto Aiani  
Managing Director  
Rainbow

# THE CHARM OF ITALIAN CHEESES AND PARTNERSHIPS

At Geris, they know nothing other than that everything revolves around volume: dashboards, spreadsheets, speed and correctly reading the market – how erratic and unpredictable it may sometimes be. At Rainbow things are very different. Here, everything revolves around trust, continuity and the firm conviction that lasting relationships are more valuable than ‘quick wins’ from passing customers.

Photography Erik de Brouwer

# LA DOLCE VITA

In a sun-drenched corner of Italy, where good food is not a luxury but a way of life, ‘Mr Aiani’ (alias Alberto Aiani) has been running a niche business alongside Ziad Geris for decades, deliberately staying clear of the hustle and bustle of the commodity market. ‘We’re not set up for commodity,’ he explains. ‘We need customers we can supply with smaller quantities on a regular basis.’ It sounds almost old-fashioned in a market that’s moving ever faster, but that is precisely where Rainbow’s strength lies.

## From law to cheese specialist

Born in 1955, Mr Aiani initially saw his future lying elsewhere. He studied law and had never imagined that he would eventually devote his life to cheese. Things turned out differently. After graduating, he started working in his father’s business and, step by step, discovered a world where trade, flavour and human relationships come together. What followed was a career full of stories, market fluctuations and international connections. Around 2010, Rainbow moved closer to Geris and, by extension, the Geris Food Group. A partnership that built on a long-standing relationship between customer and supplier was on the cards. This led to the merger of the two companies in 2011. ‘From that moment on, we were truly together,’ he says. ‘Not just because it was business-wise interesting, but mainly because Ziad and I were really on the same page. And fortunately, we still are,’ he laughs loudly.

That shared mindset still forms the basis of their partnership today. No complicated hierarchies, just short lines of communication and mutual trust. ‘We always manage to find a solution together if, unexpectedly, a problem arises. When that happens, often just a single word is enough.’ Small volumes, great reliability, Rainbow deliberately operates differently from the major market players. Over the years, the company has specialised in Italian cheeses, as well as cheeses produced abroad according to Italian tradition. Its customers are mainly foodservice and industrial clients who are not looking for speculation, but rather for stability.

‘Two tonnes here. Two tonnes there.’ No massive contracts, but returning customers who value consistent quality at predictable prices more highly than temporary (market) advantages. That approach requires flexibility, but above all, reliability in delivery. ‘It’s a business model that may look less spectacular on paper, but that is precisely why it proves to be sustainable. Whilst major players often get carried away by price fluctuations, Rainbow remains true to its core promise of striving for long-term relationships. From Europe to India, a loyal customer base knows exactly where to find us. Perhaps that is why we are one of the best-kept secrets in this market. And perhaps also, on our scale, one of the most successful.

## THE FAMILY AS THE FOUNDATION



# AMIAMO LA VITA

## DOPO LA PIOGGIA TORNA IL SOLE

*(After the rain comes the sun)*

### La Familia as the foundation

Anyone walking through the company will quickly notice the family-like atmosphere. Staff who have been with the company for thirty years work side by side with younger generations, and vice versa. According to Mr Aiani, this is no coincidence. 'This is ingrained in our Italian mentality,' he explains when asked. 'People focus on health, on quality of life, on good food, a delicious espresso on a sunny terrace. Fine wines, tasty cheeses and time for family and friends are, of course, all part of this. We love living life to the full and celebrating life. La Dolce Vita Ultimo'

In an industry where staff turnover is often high, Rainbow exudes calm in everything it does. A love for the product translates into loyalty within the team. People stay not only for the work, but also for the environment in which they work and where they feel valued. That human aspect runs like a common thread through the whole story of Rainbow. Not only internally, but also in its collaboration with partners.

### The meaning behind the name

Even the name 'Rainbow' embodies that philosophy... 'After the rain comes the sun,' explains Mr Aiani. 'And somewhere in between, a rainbow often appears on the horizon.' Although he doesn't really consider a further explanation necessary, he goes on to explain why, at the time, they deliberately chose not to choose for a traditional Italian name. In 2011, we had actually just emerged from a period of serious economic crisis. Who doesn't remember this? Rainbow symbolises optimism. It represents the belief that difficult times are always followed by new opportunities. It's a simple idea, but at the same time a striking summary of how he has been running the Italian business for years. With calm, resilience and an unparalleled confidence in the long term – in other words, the future.

### Retirement is for old people

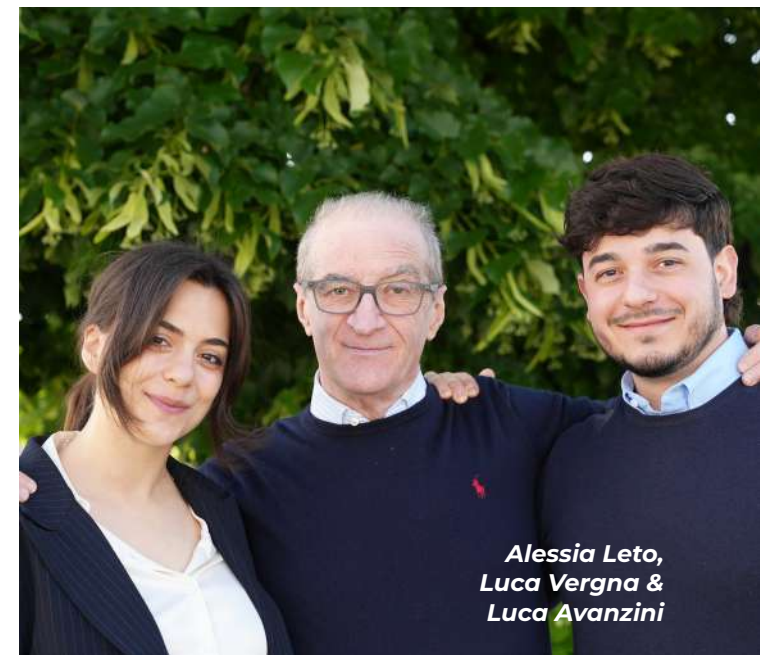
Although one of his key staff members is retiring, Mr Aiani himself is nowhere near thinking about calling

it a day. Quite simply because he still thoroughly loves what he does every single day. 'I don't need to,' he laughs. 'I want to work, meet people, enjoy myself and keep active. Above all, I want to use my knowledge, expertise and network to help Geris achieve success in Italy too.'

### Building relationships

An attitude that characterises a generation of entrepreneurs who have never viewed their work merely as a job. For Mr Aiani, it's not just about selling cheese. It's about maintaining, but above all building, relationships. Solving problems and continuing to actively contribute to the success he has built up together with Ziad.

Perhaps that is precisely why Rainbow remains relevant today in a market that is constantly changing. Not wanting to grow bigger, but perhaps smaller instead – although Mr Aiani knows that this is actually impossible.



Alessia Leto,  
Luca Vergna &  
Luca Avanzini



Ziad Geris & Alberto Aiani

# Geris's favourites



**The Darts League**  
Darts is no joke amongst our colleagues at Geris. During the break, the lads rush over to the dartboard and get the competition started. We keep track of the scores using a custom-built app!

**Our absolutely delicious coffee**  
With 20,150 coffee pods used every year, we can safely say that the coffee here is so incredibly delicious that working from home is starting to become a unnecessary.



**Fruit soda**  
Actually, the fruit soda story is just like the coffee story. Well, we don't go through 20,000 bottles of fruit soda a year, but we do go through a whole lot! It's lovely in the afternoon with your apple, or simply because it's too good to pass up.

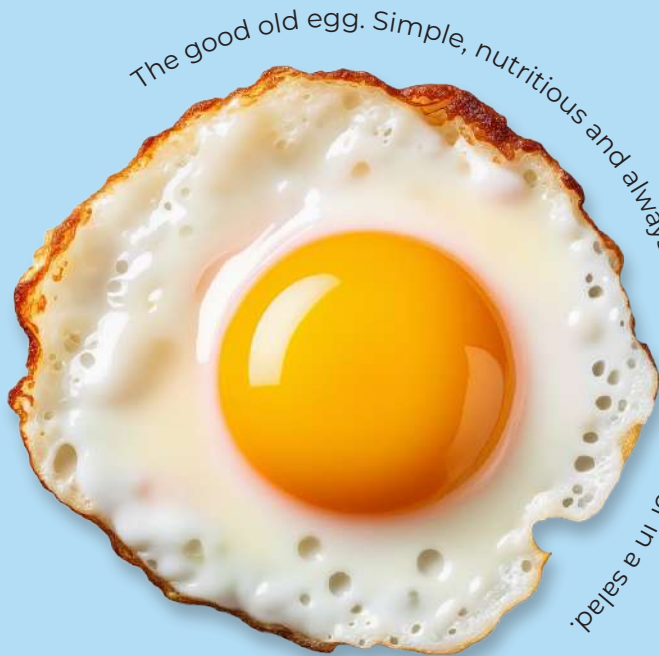


**Together, we stay fit**  
Health is incredibly important at Geris. Not just because of the eggs or having lunch together, but also because we exercise together. Twice a week, our personal trainer turns up to help us get our muscles back to being strong and fit after a day at the office.

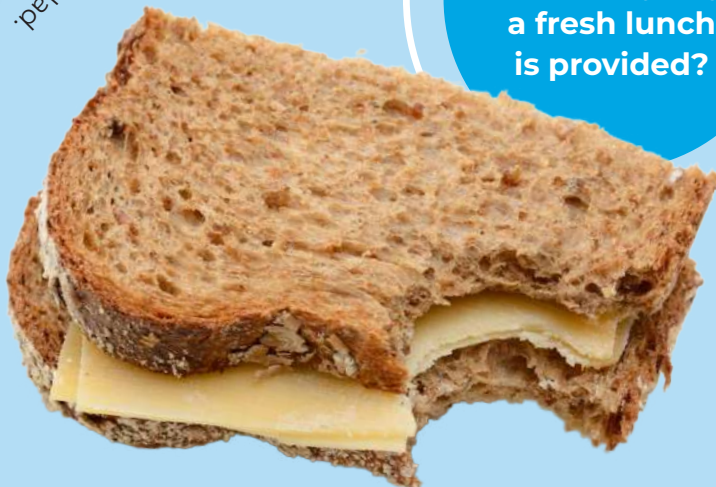


**Apple**  
You'll see what has now become an unwritten office tradition at 15:00 sharp! Our colleagues - in turns - peel an apple for the whole team.

**Lunch!**  
As soon as you walk up the stairs to the canteen, the aroma hits you. Chances are there's another generous batch of eggs on the baking tray. And with good reason – a productive working day calls for good fuel. With a protein-rich lunch, we make sure our colleagues can get on with their work full of energy.



**Lunch**  
Working together, having lunch together. Every day we all sit down as a team to enjoy our healthy lunch. One day it's a salad, the next day a tasty soup or a delicious cheese sandwich.



**Body warmer**  
The body warmer is popular among team Trade. Nobody knows exactly when it started, but all of a sudden everyone had one.



**Airpods**  
With our new system roll-out, the whole team has switched to noise-cancelling AirPods. They're handy for phone calls, for listening to music, but also definitely when you need to switch off for a bit of concentration.

Did you know that every day a fresh lunch is provided?

# “I WANT TO BE CHALLENGED AND TO BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE”

**For sixteen years now, Janina Scheurs has been one of the driving forces behind Geris. Having started out in an administrative role within a small but ambitious trading company, she has grown alongside the business and now holds the position of Head of Operations. A role in which she acts as the right-hand woman to Eric Coenen, who, as Managing Director, is responsible for Geris.**

*A conversation about trust, growth, common sense and why she still – just like on her first day – drives to work with the same energy.*

‘My dad was a supermarket manager and I actually loved nothing more than going to work with him on Saturdays. So I was soon stocking shelves on Saturdays, earning a nice bit of money straight away. And when my father changed jobs and started managing a bakery chain with 25 shops, I made the switch too. Whereas I’d thought I’d be allowed to start behind the counter, I had to start at the back of the bakery. No fancy job, but just starting at the bottom. Perhaps that’s exactly where I learnt my most important lessons.’

## **A well-deserved reward**

Given how she fulfils her role as Head of Operations with such verve, you wouldn’t expect her to have started her career as a shelf-stacker or ‘bakery girl’. And yet it was precisely those first jobs – both full-time and part-time – that shaped her. Her father deliberately placed her with the strictest branch managers. ‘I literally started with a broom in my hand.

My job was to make sure the shop was clean and the shelves were always stocked. Helping customers? I wasn’t good enough for that (yet). But even though they were so strict, their trust in me grew at the same time. Because I did what was asked of me. As best I could, without complaining. At a certain point, this led to me being given the chance to run the shop independently. Not at the weekend, but on Mondays.

That gesture was, in every way, a wonderful – and well-deserved – reward.’ An experience that still guides her in her role as Head of Operations. ‘Trust isn’t something you’re handed on a plate. You build it up by constantly showing that you do what you promise and are prepared, where necessary – without being asked – to go the extra mile. It’s no coincidence that this is one of our 5Ws at Geris. Because that’s really what it’s all about.’

## **No master plan**

Janina grew up in Boukoul, Limburg, a small village where everyone knows one another. ‘The sort of village where the kids were always outside, playing in the woods and playing football in the street. Lovely,

**Janina Scheurs**  
Head of Operations  
Geris



Janina Schreurs & Twan Martens

I love “my men” more than words can say

but I knew from a very early age that the world was bigger than this village.’ After primary school and VMBO-T, Janina choose for further training in administration. Not because she already knew exactly what she wanted to be ‘when she grew up’, but precisely because she’d ruled out what she definitely didn’t want to do. ‘There was no master plan. I simply ruled out everything that didn’t appeal to me. And that’s how I eventually ended up in administration. Which, looking back, turned out to be a good choice,’ she laughs.



Janina Schreurs & Daan Aerts

#### A job application that changed everything

In 2010, it was her mum who spotted the job advert in the newspaper. Geris in Eindhoven was looking for someone to help with their administration, amongst other things. How small the role might be, Janina decided to apply. ‘But because they didn’t have a website yet, I didn’t really know what sort of company Geris actually was. So, whilst preparing for my job interview, I had more questions than answers. Anyway, I found them in the Yellow Pages (do they still exist?) under the heading ‘courier companies’. Quite vague, really. So when I was about to set off for Eindhoven, I told my mum, ‘If I haven’t phoned you within an hour, you can start worrying.’

She had the interview with Ziad at the Eindhoven office. The first interview went well and, shortly after a second interview, the long-awaited phone call came. ‘I’d got the job!’

#### Common thread

‘Looking back, it sometimes feels surreal. The fact that where we are now is, and always will be, special. We’ve moved three times in the past years. From Eindhoven to Venlo, then to Deurne and finally to Nederweert. And in between, new companies were set up and new offices opened. Moving seems to be the common thread running through my career. And perhaps that’s actually the case. Just like system implementations, for that matter. Because growth

demands flawless IT systems that help us strive for perfection. I find those kinds of projects absolutely brilliant, by the way. Secretly, I’m a bit of a nerd,’ she says with a sense of humour.

#### Never a dull moment

And yet she sometimes misses something from the past. ‘Those little moments of celebration – I do miss them sometimes. For example, when we’d invoiced our first million, we went absolutely wild. It simply had to be celebrated. Ziad in the lead, Patrick right beside him. And I followed. Naturally. Blindly. Those kinds of moments were pure. And unforgettable, too. As you grow and expand, those kinds of moments become rarer. But they’re definitely still there; we just don’t notice them anymore. And yet it’s these kinds of moments that you have to celebrate as a team. You have to experience them, because success is something you have to cherish.’

#### The power of trust

Over the past few years, Janina has grown step by step to her current role as Head of Operations. ‘Ziad and Peter-Jan have always challenged me. They gave me the chance to prove myself, to develop and to grow in my role. Well, not at my own pace, but at the pace of Geris’s growth. And that was rapid. Today, it’s Eric and Daan who give me the confidence to shape and define the organisation as Head of Operations. It’s brilliant.’ She describes her collaboration with

Eric Coenen in particular as special. ‘When Eric was appointed Managing Director, I told him he could always count on me and was welcome to turn to me for support. Whatever it was. We’ve now been working closely together for years and form a solid team.’ According to her, they complement each other perfectly. ‘Whilst Eric himself is still closely involved in the commercial side, in his role he mainly looks at the bigger picture. I’m more focused on structure, processes, organisation and efficiency.’

#### Connection

These days, however, Janina is also focusing more and more on the development of people, processes and collaboration between the various departments. When asked about her biggest challenge, she says it is the connection between trade and operations. ‘Whilst we, as the operations team, are based in Nederweert, our traders are now based in ‘s Hertogenbosch. So they’re working remotely. They make arrangements with our customers and suppliers and, together with us, must ensure that (follow-up) processes run efficiently and as agreed. And mutual communication is crucial in this regard. They need to be able to understand and interpret customer’s requirements, and we must ensure that everything that needs to be done is carried out on our end. Together, we can tackle any challenge. And in doing so, it’s important that we turn ‘them’ and ‘us’ back into ‘we’. According to her, this requires,

amongst other things, effective onboarding of new staff, the ongoing education and training of existing staff, and a continuous open dialogue within the organisation. 'You can't expect people to automatically understand how everything works and how the various departments in our organisation are interconnected and work together,' she says firmly.

#### Common sense

Janina doesn't have to think long when asked about Geris's 'secret'. 'Our 5Ws are our holy grail and revolve around one basic principle: common sense. Our culture – our core DNA – has, fortunately, remained well preserved despite our growth and is surprisingly simple. It's not rocket science. We do what we promise. We honour our commitments. We treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. We resolve problems within 48 hours... and so on. That sort of thing. Simple principles, but powerful precisely because of that.' According to her, that's also where Geris's unique selling point lies. 'Our story makes us who we are. And DAAS (Dairy As A Service) makes us different from others.'

#### A blue heart

Janina is regularly asked why she's still at Geris after 16 years. 'Which is actually quite a strange question, because I think I really do radiate in everything I do that I'm having an incredible time. I have – and am given – complete freedom to do what I do. Our continuous growth constantly brings new challenges, and the sense of doing things together within Geris gives me an incredible amount of energy every single day. I'm still happy when I drive onto the premises in the morning. Because every single day is different and offers new opportunities. Every day, we can improve something, add value and take new steps together.'

Yet she also admits honestly that she won't stay at any cost. 'I think I'll leave if I get the feeling that I no longer add value to the organisation. As long as that isn't the case, I'm perfectly happy here.' And if she could choose again? 'I have a blue heart. A Geris heart. And yes, without having to think about it for even a moment, I'd make the same choice again today. Although others might think differently, I'm not married to my job. But I do love "my men" more than words can say.' Especially those from the very beginning... It'll take a while yet before I leave them on their own,' concludes a smiling Janina.

Janina Schreurs  
together with  
Floor Melssen  
en Helen Joor

# FEMALE POWER



# GERIS UPDATES

**Curious about the new construction?  
Scan the QR code and watch the video.**

## New construction projects underway

The first outlines are visible! We are proud to be working on various construction. Together, step by step, we are building quality and growth. A great result to look forward to!

## New talent

Since February, we have welcomed three new interns to Geris. Finnan supported the Data & IT department, Gaby gained experience within Marketing, and Pieter completed his internship with Trade. It is great to give new talent the opportunity to further develop their skills and grow within Geris.

## In the pocket!

We never stop learning – our top performers passed the HACCP certificate flawless.

## Literally #GASEROP

After weeks of training and, of course, running, our colleagues completed the Vestigingsloop in 's-Hertogenbosch. Wearing matching 'Geris' blue, ofcourse.



# DAAS EXPLAINED

## (AGAIN) 😊

### Risk Management & Derivatives

Without risk management

Margin pressure  
Uncertain contracts

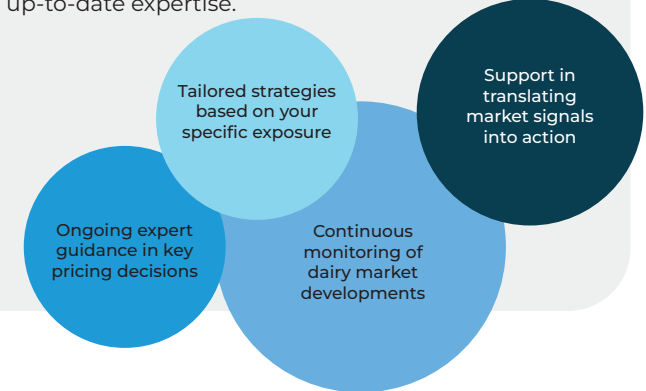
Unpredictable  
markets

With our approach

- Price certainty
- Controlled risk exposure
- Stable, informed decision-making
- Stronger long-term strategy

#### How it works:

Our approach goes beyond risk reduction by combining market insights with tailored hedging strategies, supporting your purchasing decisions with up-to-date expertise.



### Quality Control

From close control to complete confidence. Warehouse, laboratory and office work as one connected system. Continuous monitoring of every product.

#### WHAT WE DO

- Inspect dairy products up close
- Test and evaluate throughout the process
- Monitor quality at every stage

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

- |                                                             |                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Consistent quality</b><br>Always the same high standard  | <b>Maximum food safety</b><br>Strict control and testing            |
| <b>Fast quality assurance</b><br>Quick checks and approvals | <b>Reliable supply continuity</b><br>Stable and dependable delivery |

### (Re)Packaging

Our repackaging and relabeling services are designed to increase flexibility and efficiency in your production process. We deliver products exactly to your specifications, helping you streamline operations and reduce handling complexity.

- Reduced operational handling
- Less production waste
- Improved product utilization
- Simplified downstream processing
- More sustainable operations

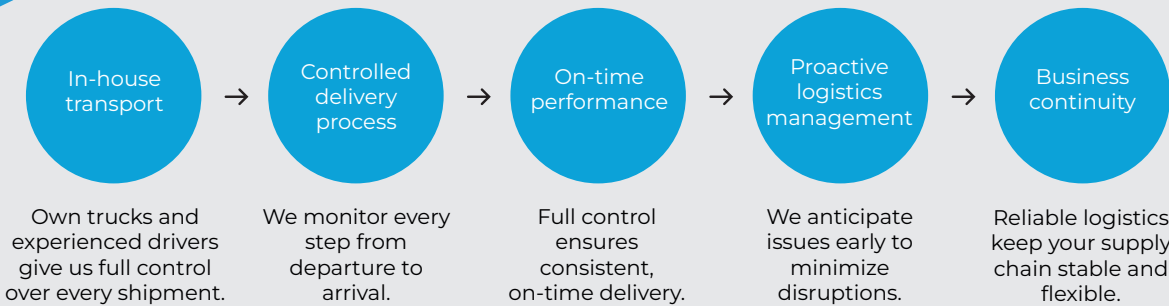
### Cleaning

Our cheese cleaning and repackaging services help recover product value that might otherwise be lost.

- EC-approved** processing for safe and controlled handling
- Re-entry** into production through professional repackaging
- Waste reduction** across the supply chain
- Higher cost efficiency** through value recovery

### Logistics

Logistics that keep your supply chain moving



# DAAS

### Customized Solutions

#### WHY IT MATTERS

- Every business is different
- We design around your operations

#### WHAT WE CUSTOMIZE

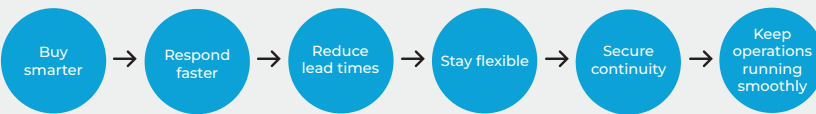
- Pallets
- Packaging
- Cardboard handling
- Private label solutions

#### YOUR BENEFITS

- Increased efficiency
- Less complexity
- Seamless workflow

### Warehousing

With warehouses in the Netherlands and Italy, we offer flexible, temperature-controlled storage and fast product availability.



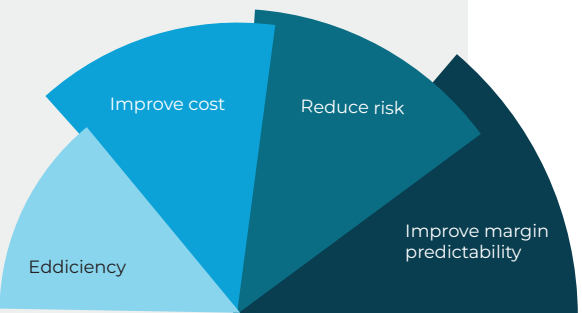
### Sales & Procurement

We secure reliable access to premium cheese, butter, and specialty dairy products at competitive market conditions through strategic sourcing and strong supplier relationships.

#### FOR YOU THIS MEANS

- |                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Dependable supply         | Fewer disruptions |
| Better purchasing control | Fewer disruptions |

#### We help you



You gain full transparency into pricing, availability, and market trends, enabling faster, smarter, and more confident decisions.



# FROM GOOD TO GREAT

Photography Eddie Mol

It has now been a year since the 'Geris from Good to Great' theme was introduced internally. It embodies a 'full focus' mindset that has, in principle, been part of the organisation for much longer, but is now receiving a little more attention. Because behind our growth, new challenges and successes are people. Motivated employees who seize opportunities with both hands, but who are also given the chance to develop and bring out the best in themselves.

*Esmee van Bakel*  
HR Talent Scout  
Geris Food Group  
& Floor Melssen  
Manager Human Resources  
Geris Food Group

**“A good match isn’t found in a CV, but in the person behind it.”**

You can clearly see their enthusiasm when we ask Floor Melssen and Esmee van Bakel what the secret behind Geris’s recruitment policy is. Whilst Floor is responsible for HR within the HR&M (Human Resources & Marketing) team, Esmee is the seasoned recruiter who, with great tact, brings the right people in for an initial interview. Both ladies have different backgrounds and come from different companies. ‘It’s pure coincidence that we’ve ended up here together,’ Floor begins. ‘There wasn’t a single company that felt quite the same as when I first walked into Geris. The connection, the people, the culture – really, everything was different,’ adds Esmee.

A year later, that enthusiasm is still just as strong. Geris’s DNA forms the basis for everything within its HR policy and explains why these ladies have such a keen sense of which people are a good fit for Geris, ZZA or Artemis – and which aren’t.

## **The Geris ‘Blue’**

For Floor and Esmee, a good match goes beyond a CV, experience or qualifications. They’re particularly interested in the person ‘behind the CV’ and the energy someone brings to the table. They call this ‘Geris Blue’ themselves: having drive, being an entrepreneur and proactive. People who want to move forward and, above all, want to ‘step on the gas’. ‘Don’t just talk, get on with it,’ says Esmee with a laugh. That Geris Blue is the foundation of every building block within the Geris Food Group. ‘It’s not necessarily a personality, but a way of working. A way of doing things.’ For Floor and Esmee, it’s all about finding people who fit this profile. So they look beyond that piece of paper or diploma. Of course, the role is taken into account. But above all, they consider what the team needs and what someone can contribute to the team based on their potential. ‘We want to make teams better and stronger,’ Floor explains when asked. ‘Which means that sometimes a different colour is a better fit,’ she says, referring to LIFO’s four colour personality types.

# “WE DON’T LABEL PEOPLE, BUT RATHER HELP THEM REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL”



## We look beyond a job role

At Geris, development isn't just about career progression. Sometimes growth lies precisely in finding a place where someone gains more energy and can flourish. The ladies have a keen eye for recognising talents and know how to deploy them effectively. 'If someone can further develop their existing talents, they'll feel better about themselves, be more motivated to perform, and if we give them the freedom and trust to do so, the work they produce will only get better,' says Floor. It's a snowball effect that starts with selecting the right people. They don't find the right fit in a standard profile. They look beyond the surface, take that extra step, and want the best for both the individual and the company. So 'From Good to Great' isn't about good marks or performance reviews. 'The last thing we want is to label people. We want just one thing: to empower people.'

## A warm welcome

From the very first contact right through to their first day at work, Floor and Esmee do everything they can to make new colleagues feel part of the team. 'It's about people feeling at home and being able to be themselves. We treat others as we'd like to be treated ourselves. That's why we make a conscious effort to take time for people, ask questions and show genuine interest. As an employer, we want employees to feel the freedom to contribute to our success based on their own talents. After all, it's a

team sport. This is reflected in all our communication throughout the recruitment process. We show who we are in all honesty and tell our story in our own way. A story told authentically by our own staff. In this way, future staff also get to meet the team they'll be working with straight away. And that works really well.'



Cindy Cortenbach & Floor Melssen

## With Geris from Good to Great

From Good to Great is something we're actively building every day. 'We either do it well or we don't do it. It's as simple as that,' says Floor. 'Together with our colleagues in marketing, we develop (under the slogan "At Geris, anything's possible") recruitment campaigns that make a real difference. Thanks to this, we haven't needed an external agency in the past few years,' says Esmee with a touch of pride. 'Employer branding is something we take very seriously. We want to further strengthen Geris image as an employer. "Geris blue suits you" is a bit of a tongue-in-cheek reference, but it actually tells the whole story.'

As well as externally, 'From Good to Great' is also very much alive internally. Esmee herself is a wonderful example of this. Having started out on the trade and logistics team, she has progressed to a role as a recruiter within the HR&M team. 'At Geris, there really is plenty of room to develop yourself as a person. We encourage all our people to actually take such a step, especially when we see that someone has so much more to offer. Everyone can seize that opportunity here. Where necessary, we help and support our staff, because we know from experience that when people are able to spread their wings, they fly with confidence in their roles.'

## At Geris, it's possible

For Floor and Esmee, 'Good to Great' isn't just a non-committal slogan on the wall. It's embedded in the way people are welcomed, guided and challenged. It's about recognising talent, creating opportunities and believing that everyone can grow. 'It's about constantly telling who Geris is, what we do and what we stand for. There's a philosophy, a vision and a culture, and that cannot be emphasised enough.' Because ultimately, every step from good to great begins with the people who make it possible. The team that's there. And that's what these two ladies are committed to every single day.

*“Do good, and good will come your way”*

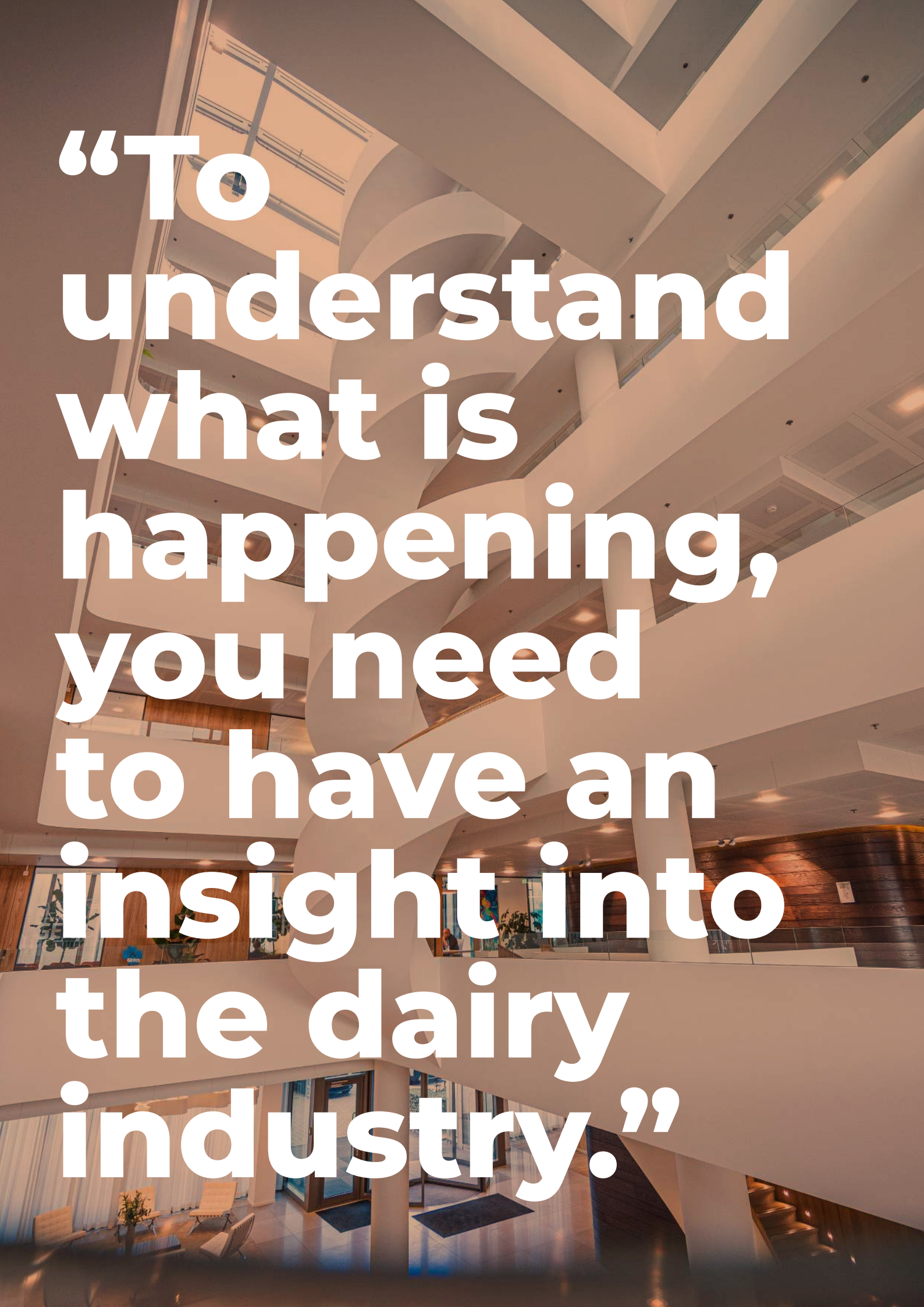
# If you want to stay relevant you have to keep looking ahead

Photography Erik de Brouwer

Whilst international dairy markets have been all over the place in recent years, Daan Dekkers, as Commercial Director, calmly built up 'his' department based on a clear vision. Together with Eric Coenen and Toby Soumah, he introduced, amongst other things, a risk and derivatives desk and relocated his traders to 's-Hertogenbosch. This was the start of the next phase for Geris. A phase of growth, but also one of further professionalisation within the organisation.



**Daan Dekkers**  
Commercial Director  
Geris



# “To understand what is happening, you need to have an insight into the dairy industry.”

*At Koningsweg 101 in 's-Hertogenbosch, they are focussing on the next phase on the first floor. With Artemis as the new cornerstone. With Solarec as a strategic partner. With a growing team of traders, analysts and specialists. And with an organisation that makes effective use of data, models, technology and artificial intelligence.*

*But according to Daan, ultimately it's still all about people. About customers. About suppliers. Colleagues. Partners. Whilst he spends his days working on the future of the international dairy market, there is now someone waiting for him at home who reminds him why the future is so important: his just born daughter, Rosa.*

*On behalf of everyone at Geris – Congratulations, Daan!!*

‘To understand what is happening at Geris, you need to have an insight into the dairy industry – and, in particular, the speed at which it is changing,’ Daan explains. ‘The past few years have been extraordinary. In no particular order, I would mention Covid, an energy crisis with soaring raw material prices, geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and a series of unforeseen market factors that created unprecedented volatility. As a result, the markets in which we operate became extremely difficult to predict. ‘But...’ Daan continues, deliberately pausing for effect, ‘...the greater our knowledge of – and expertise in – derivatives, the better we are able to manage changes in the market. In my view, risk management is incredibly important, not only for strengthening and developing customer relationships, but also for growing the physical order book.’

## **Bluetongue**

‘Looking back at the past year – 2025 – it was the year in which data truly enabled us to make a difference. While many market participants were caught off guard by developments in milk prices and the corresponding movements in the cheese and butter markets, we saw signs that the market was heading in a different direction,’ Daan continues. ‘Bluetongue disease created an unexpected twist during the year, resulting in changes to the entire cattle cycle. This was set to lead to a surplus of milk. Of course, there were other factors at play as well, but this was certainly a significant one.’

‘In many ways, it was the perfect storm for us,’ Daan explains. ‘Because we have invested heavily over recent years in the development of advanced tools and data systems, we have access to up-to-date and relevant market information at any moment of the day. By analysing, translating and interpreting this data, we aim to identify market trends more quickly. This enables us to develop smart commercial strategies for both customers and suppliers, while any associated risks can be hedged through the use of derivatives.’ Daan is keen to stress that good old-fashioned common sense remains just as important. ‘You really need to understand how this industry works in order to make the right decisions.’

## **Nothing is bulletproof**

‘Milk supply is one of the most important datasets available. The closer you are to that data – both as an organisation and as a trader – the better you can anticipate what is likely to happen. But appearances can be deceptive. Nothing is foolproof. There is always a risk that “something” may shift the market in an entirely different direction,’ Daan explains. ‘That is why we never rely on a single scenario. We always have at least two in place. You could call it a contingency plan, but our preference is to leave as little as possible to chance.’

## **More than just cheese and butter**

‘While Geris has built its reputation as a specialist in butter and cheese, the scope of our activities has broadened considerably with Artemis. Do I see opportunities? Absolutely,’ Daan says with a smile. ‘In addition to butter and cheese, we now have access to milk, cream, whey and milk concentrates. That plays to our advantage when you look at the way markets are evolving. If you focus on just one product, you risk missing the bigger picture. Understanding the relationships between different markets is crucial if you want to read the market correctly and identify opportunities that others may overlook. ‘It also creates valuable synergies across the business. And that is exactly the sort of challenge I enjoy most.’

## **From trading house to trading machine**

The dairy world is changing, and so is Geris. ‘Moving our team from Nederweert to ‘s-Hertogenbosch was a strategic decision. It has both pros and cons, as we’re no longer sitting next to or opposite our colleagues from supply chain, logistics or quality control. Our financial team is also suddenly at a distance. However, if we wanted to realise our dreams and ambitions, we had no other choice. At least, that’s what we thought at the time... And now – now that we’re here – we know that for certain, because the pieces of the puzzle are really falling into place,’ Daan reflects. ‘The team is growing. Faster than ever. With the arrival of “a different type of trader”, we’re further expanding our specialisms, and data, risk management and derivatives are playing an increasingly important role.’

# Encounters



## Valuable meetings

We welcomed Solarec to our head office in Nederweert. It was a valuable visit, full of inspiring conversations and new insights.

## A successful opening at Artemis.

Artemis, the new company within the Geris Food Group, was proudly officially opened. During an inspiring tour, visitors discovered the story behind the farm and the milk production process. The day was all about innovation, growth and collaboration. Over a shared lunch, ideas were exchanged, connections were made and Artemis's promising future was celebrated.



## Full of energy in Singapore

Our top performers proudly represented ZZA at the trade fair in Singapore. Full of enthusiasm, they were ready to meet visitors, make new contacts and explore opportunities. The international trade fair provided a valuable platform to showcase ZZA's expertise, strengthen relationships and gain inspiration for future collaborations and growth.



## From milk to mozzarella

The Commercial Team of Geris took a look behind the scenes at the production process in Sint Jansteen, where ZZA mozzarella is made. From raw materials to the finished product: an inspiring and educational experience that provided a unique insight into the craftsmanship behind our mozzarella.



"I am the sort of person who always wants to move forward. If that's not possible, I get difficult."



'Previously, we were much more of a player in the spot market,' explains Daan. 'When clients wanted to buy more than three months in advance, we found that quite nerve-racking. So quite a lot has changed in recent years. With our own risk and derivatives desk, better data and new technologies, we can help our clients plan further and further ahead. It's no longer just about "price", but about insights, scenarios, risk hedging and comprehensive solutions.

And for that, we needed 'different' people. For example, we now have traders in our team who studied econometrics and operate from a mathematical background. We've also welcomed data specialists with a strong IT background into our team. This enables us to link macroeconomic developments to opportunities in the market.'

**"We're modernising and automating. It's a win-win situation in so many ways."**

## Ideas need to be heard

That forward-thinking mindset is deeply ingrained in Daan himself. He laughs as he recounts his first management meeting at Geris, years ago. His manager at the time had just left, and Daan, drawing on his confidence, had managed to convince Geris's management that he at least deserved a chance. And so, suddenly, he found himself sitting in on the management meeting. 'I'd resolved not to say too much during that first meeting,' he laughs. 'But I only managed to keep that up for half an hour. In my view, there was too much discussion without it leading anywhere. So I ended up putting a few alternative ideas on the table after all.

However, my ideas were all rejected. I really couldn't understand it...' Looking back now, he recalls this moment with a broad smile because many of his ideas have all been implemented.

Perhaps that also explains why he places such great value on young talent. 'I believe everyone should be given a chance to share their ideas. I'd be really upset if anyone here were to say now that I wouldn't listen to them. Who am I to think I have a monopoly on wisdom? I'm absolutely certain that we get further together, and that there are people within my team who have some bloody good ideas.'

## Learning from others

Daan works carefully to foster the culture within the team. A great example of this is Black Friday. 'A moment when, every quarter, we look back together – but above all, we look ahead.' The most recent event took place at PSV's Stadium, which is situated right in the centre of Eindhoven. 'We were given an insight into how a top international sports organisation is run. Jaap van Baar, PSV's CFO, took us through the world of transfers, risks, team performance, club policy and interests, as well as the development of long-term scenarios to ensure we can continue to compete for trophies.' For Daan, there is a clear parallel. Just as in soccer, it's all about the details. Whether it's a transfer contract with clever clauses, an international trade deal or a strategic position in the long-term market. 'Success is anything but a matter of chance,' concludes Daan.

A portrait of Ayshe Lifka, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a light blue patterned blouse. She is sitting at a table with a red tablecloth. The background is a bright, modern interior with large windows and green plants.

**Ayshe Lifka**  
Commercial Director,  
Export & Industry  
Rücker GmbH

Photography Jasper Obdeijn

A CONVERSATION WITH AYSHE LIFKA  
OF MOLKEREI RÜCKER (MEGGLE GROUP)

# Trust is not built in one day

**For this interview, we traveled to Aurich in northern Germany. At the headquarters of the company - long known as Molkerei Rücker - we met with Ayshe Lifka, who has been a familiar face within the organization for nearly three decades. What began as a conversation about cheese, markets, and sustainability, soon evolved into a story about family, family businesses, trust, and long-term partnerships.**

That is hardly surprising. Although Molkerei Rücker has now officially become part of the Meggle Group, Ayshe views the transition as a natural next step. "A family business has acquired another family business. The name may change, but the values remain the same. In essence, not much changes at all."

#### From Groningen to Aurich

Born in Germany in 1972 to Turkish parents, Ayshe moved to the Netherlands at the age of eighteen to study International Business & Marketing in Groningen. "We lived close to the Dutch border, and I wanted to broaden my horizons. Studying in the Netherlands gave me exactly the international perspective I was looking for." Fluent in five languages, including Dutch and Italian, Ayshe has always felt at home crossing borders - both literally and professionally.

After completing her studies, she returned to Germany and joined Molkerei Rücker in 1998 as an assistant. More than 28 years later, she is responsible for all international sales activities within the company.

What keeps her motivated after all these years? "Of course, I love our products, but what I enjoy most are the countless encounters with people. I travel extensively, meet different cultures, and experience the many ways business is conducted around the world. That international aspect keeps my work exciting. Markets have also become far less predictable than they were twenty years ago. The landscape is more challenging today, but that also makes it more interesting."

#### A family business since 1890

The story of Rücker began in 1890. Over the course of more than 135 years, the company grew into one of Germany's leading privately owned cheese producers. Operating from its facilities in Aurich and Wismar, the company produces approximately 100,000 tons of cheese annually, alongside butter and milk powder. Aurich specializes in white cheese products, including the well-known salad cheese that was once commonly marketed as feta, while Wismar produces Gouda, Edam, Cheddar, and a variety of other hard cheeses.



Watch the film that was shot  
during the writing of this  
article.



*Paul Rücker together with the third generation*



According to Ayshe, the company's strength extends far beyond its products. "As a family business, we stand for quality, tradition, and strong relationships. If you stay true to those values and protect them carefully, success will follow naturally."

#### **A new chapter**

A new chapter has now begun. The acquisition by the Bavarian-based Meggle Group has been fully completed. Since June 2026, the former Rücker facilities have officially operated under the names Meggle Cheese Aurich and Meggle Cheese Wismar, while the Rücker brand for now continues to exist in the market. The acquisition creates one of Germany's largest privately owned dairy companies and further strengthens Meggle's position in the European

**"SOME THINGS CHANGE, BUT OUR VALUES REMAIN THE SAME: RESPECT, OPEN COMMUNICATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND A LONG-TERM VISION."**

cheese sector. For Ayshe, the transition feels familiar. "Of course, some things change, but not everything. One family business has acquired another. We share the same values: respect, open communication, entrepreneurship, and a long-term vision."

Founded in 1887, Meggle has grown into one of Germany's strongest food brands. Today, the group generates annual revenues exceeding one billion euros, operates multiple production sites across Europe, and is active in butter, dairy ingredients, cheese, milk products, and bakery solutions. "I see change as an opportunity. Right now, we are getting to know each other better as organizations and are exploring where synergies exist and how we can continue to grow together."

#### **A business relationship that became a friendship**

Naturally, the conversation turns to the longstanding partnership with Geris. Ayshe's relationship with Ziad Geris dates back to a time before Geris existed as an independent company. "At the time, Ziad was still working for Interfood. I think we first met about twenty-five years ago. We were both relatively new in our roles, and we immediately connected. Over the years, we developed an intensive collaboration based on mutual trust and respect - a foundation that remains unchanged to this day."

The strength of that trust became evident when Ziad launched his own company in 2009. "We never hesitated for a moment. Of course we wanted to continue working with him. What we had built





## UP NORTH, WE LEAD A SLIGHTLY MORE RELAXED LIFE. NOT BECAUSE WE DO LESS, BUT BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THAT QUALITY COMES FROM TAKING YOUR TIME. WE'VE KNOWN THAT SINCE 1890.

together appeared to be strong enough. We have an exceptionally good relationship and communicate with complete openness and honesty. Quick wins that benefit one party more than the other are simply not an option. We either win together, or neither of us wins.”

According to Ayshe, trust is never automatic. “You have to earn it. Sometimes markets are favorable, and sometimes they are difficult. It is during those difficult moments that you discover how strong a relationship truly is.” After more than two decades of collaboration, the business relationship evolved into something more. “Yes, eventually friendship develops as well. That doesn’t happen overnight either—it grows over time. But there is no doubt that Ziad is a good friend.”

### Quality as a constant

Despite increasing market volatility and growing competition, one factor remains unchanged: quality. “Our customers expect authentic, high-quality

products. Today, that is more important than ever.” Innovation, she believes, is essential for staying relevant. “We are constantly moving forward and constantly looking for new opportunities—whether that involves packaging, applications, or entirely new product concepts. But our focus on quality never changes.”

The European cheese market is evolving rapidly. Consumers are paying closer attention to origin, sustainability, and transparency. “You see it everywhere, not just in dairy. People want to know where products come from, how they are made, and what impact they have on our planet.”

### It all starts on the farm

For Ayshe, sustainability is not a marketing slogan - it is a responsibility. “It starts with the farmer. How are the cows raised? How are raw materials managed? Then you look at production, packaging, and transportation before the product finally reaches the supermarket shelf and eventually the consumer’s home.”

Sustainability, she explains, encompasses the entire supply chain. Some improvements can be implemented relatively quickly, while others require years of commitment. “It is a continuous process, and every step matters.” The topic is also deeply personal to her. “We only have one planet. Twenty years ago, hardly anyone talked about sustainability. Today, we all understand the importance of caring for the world around us. What we take from nature, we must also give back. That means carefully considering how we use our resources and raw materials.”

### Family as a culture

Throughout our conversation, one word keeps resurfacing: family. Not only because Rücker was a family-owned business for generations, but because it describes the company’s culture. “We truly operate as a team. We treat each other with respect and communicate openly and honestly. Criticism is constructive, never destructive. And of course, sometimes there are disagreements or even arguments—but that happens in the best families too,” Ayshe laughs, recalling an anecdote involving her former boss.

### Looking ahead

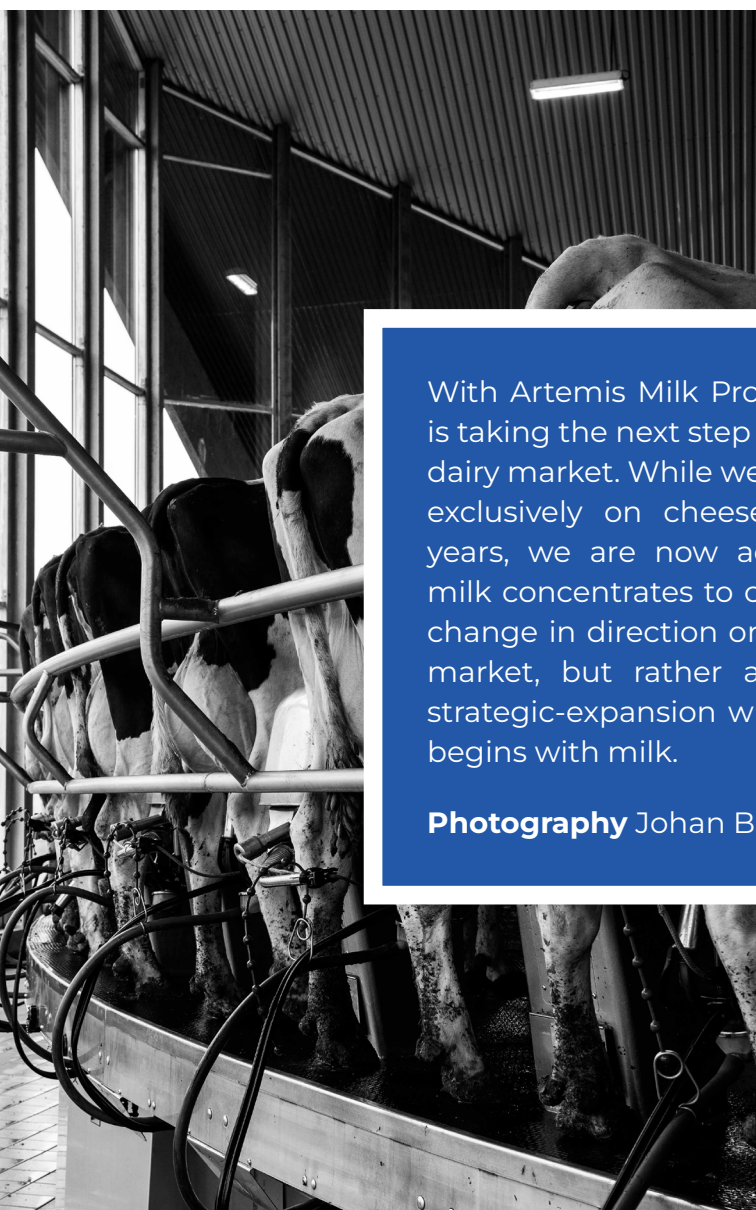
With approximately 450 employees across Aurich and Wismar, the organization remains large enough to make an impact while staying small enough for people to know one another. When asked about the future of the dairy industry, Ayshe does not hesitate. “Food safety and sustainability will become increasingly important. The next generation of consumers is highly conscious of these issues. At the same time, quality remains a fundamental requirement.” She also expects companies to become significantly more efficient in their use of energy, raw materials, and transportation. “Ultimately, it is all about balance. If you take something, you must also give something back.”

### Passion as the key ingredient

As our conversation comes to an end, we ask one final question: what is the one message she hopes people take away? She smiles. “People make the difference.” There is a brief pause before she continues. “If you are passionate about what you do, you are already halfway there. Passion keeps you learning, keeps you curious, and keeps you building. The same applies to our customers, our partners, and our employees. In the end, successful business is not about volumes, contracts, or market share. It is about trust. And trust is not built in a day.”



# CLOSER TO THE SOURCE ST RONGER IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN



With Artemis Milk Products, Geris Food Group is taking the next step in its development in the dairy market. While we as a group have focused exclusively on cheese and butter for many years, we are now adding milk, cream, and milk concentrates to our portfolio. This is not a change in direction or a leap into an unknown market, but rather a logical and above all, strategic-expansion within a supply chain that begins with milk.

**Photography** Johan Bakels



**Hans Janssen Groesbeek**  
Sales Director  
Artemis



START READING  
HERE

Anyone who looks at the history of Geris Food Group will see a company that is constantly seeking ways to add value to the dairy supply chain. “It all starts with milk,” says Gerbrand van Veldhuizen, co-CEO of Geris Food Group. “That’s the foundation of everything we do. With Artemis, we’re moving toward the source—and thus the beginning of the chain. This not only gives us better insight into the market and greater control over developments, but also more opportunities to create value for our customers, suppliers, and partners.”

#### A Logical Next Step

To outsiders, Artemis may seem like an unexpected new venture at first glance, but it is above all a logical continuation of what we’ve been doing for years. After all, the products Artemis trades in milk, cream and milk concentrates form the basis for many of the products that Geris, as an operating company, already trades worldwide today. By actively managing these streams as well, we’ll establish a much broader and stronger position within the dairy chain. “We explicitly see Artemis as an extension of our existing product portfolio,” explains Gerbrand. “We were already strong in cheese and butter, but their origin, of course, lies in milk. By now actively engaging with liquid dairy streams, we’re creating a much stronger connection between the source and the final product. Aside from direct access to milk streams, we gain greater insight into available volumes and associated market movements. This enables us to respond more quickly and effectively to market developments and to directly link supply and demand within the chain.”

“Liquids have their own unique dynamics. While cheese and butter are relatively stable products, liquid dairy is all about speed, flexibility, and timing,” adds Hans Janssen-Groesbeek. As Sales Director, Hans is responsible for day-to-day operations at Artemis. “Milk must be processed daily. This means that demand or supply can change rapidly. Surpluses or shortages often arise unexpectedly and require immediate action.”

“With Artemis, we are explicitly positioning ourselves as the connecting link between milk producers, processors, and industrial buyers,” Gerbrand continues. “When a surplus arises, Artemis helps find new markets for those volumes. When shortages loom, we can ensure that additional volumes are available. This creates a position that allows us to add value for multiple parties within the same supply chain.”



Ziad Geris  
René van Bakel  
Alex van Bakel

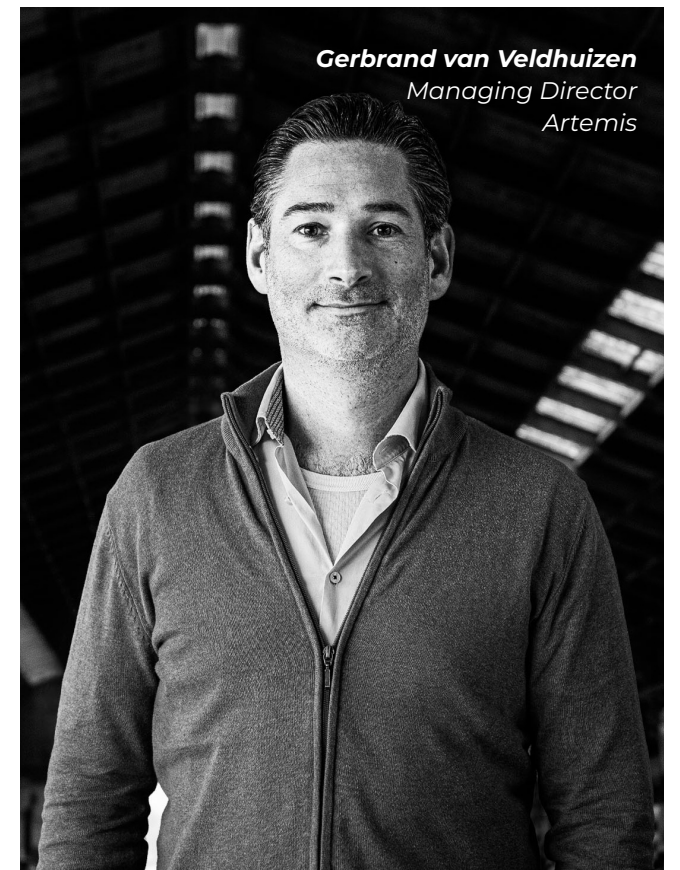
#### We literally move volumes from the farm to the global market

A key foundation of Artemis is its partnership with Vreba Melkvee, the largest dairy farm in the Netherlands. With approximately 2,250 dairy cows, Vreba has direct access to large milk flows and extensive experience in dairy farming. This partnership ensures that Artemis operates close to the source from day one. For Geris, this means more than just access to raw materials. It means insight, greater speed, and, above all, better control over an increasingly complex market. The combination of milk production, processing, and international trade creates a model in which the various links in the chain reinforce one another.

#### A Distinct Identity

Although Artemis is part of the Geris Food Group, a conscious decision was made to position it independently. The liquid dairy market has different customers, different trade flows, and a different dynamic than the traditional cheese and butter trade. That is why Artemis has its own team, its own brand, and its own commercial focus. At the helm of day-to-day commercial operations is Hans Janssen-Groesbeek, a well-known name in the international dairy trade.

According to Hans Janssen-Groesbeek, that is precisely where Artemis’s strength lies. “The market demands specialization. Liquid dairy has its own rhythm, its own logistics, and its own dynamics. With



Gerbrand van Veldhuizen  
Managing Director  
Artemis

Artemis, we can focus entirely on that, while at the same time benefiting from the Geris Food Group’s international network, reputation, and success.” He also sees significant opportunities for customers who are increasingly looking for reliable partners capable of offering multiple product streams. “Customers want flexibility. They’re looking for suppliers who understand how the market moves and who can collaborate on solutions. With Artemis, we’re adding exactly that to our existing offering.”

#### A Stronger Position in the Supply Chain

The establishment of Artemis is part of a broader trend visible in the international dairy market.

“We want to be a partner that adds value at every link in the chain,” says van Veldhuizen. “Artemis brings us closer to the source and, at the same time, makes us stronger for the future. That’s why we don’t view this venture as a new business alongside Geris, but as a natural extension of who we are and what we do.”

“We literally move  
large quantities  
from the farm  
to the global market”

A Conversation with Frank van de Laar

# Warehouse and production department

Photography Jasper Obdeijn

Some people don't need to use many words to make an impression. Frank van de Laar is one of those people. At Geris, Frank is the Production Team Leader—a role that seems tailor-made for him. Calm, down-to-earth, always friendly, and constantly working to ensure that everything runs smoothly and problems are resolved in no time. His colleagues are certainly happy to have him around, because wherever Frank goes, things turn out well. Although he's modest himself, it's clear that coordinating, organizing, and bringing people together is truly his strength.



Frank with his girlfriend and family

Before Frank joined Geris, he worked in the baking industry for many years. At Bakkerij Bekkers in Veghel, he served as manager, overseeing an organization with sixteen stores. It was a great job, but one in which workweeks of sixty to sixty-five hours were standard rather than the exception. “I was basically always working,” Frank says. “Which I don’t mind, as long as there’s a good balance between give and take. So when I got into an argument one day over a vacation request, I was actually done with it pretty quickly. Time to go.”

## Loyalty

Perhaps a bit drastic, but Frank resigned. He did, however, completed his final year properly, because he felt he owed that to his colleagues. “You don’t just leave them alone. Plus, I wanted to have time to think about what I really wanted.” That answer turned out to be closer than he thought. “I drove past Geris in Nederweert every day, and after a quick search online, I learned what Geris does, and it really appealed to me.” So after a phone call, an interview, an extensive tour, and a day shadowing the team, he was fully convinced and signed his contract.



Frank van de Laar  
Teamleader Production  
Geris

## Juggling it all

At first, Frank was assigned a role on the Warehouse team, but thanks to his experience, he quickly moved up to Production Team Leader. “I’ve never worked in a factory myself, but I really enjoy further optimizing our production processes and, whenever possible, making them run even more efficiently. Multitasking makes it possible to balance many different tasks at the same time, but also managing resources more intelligently gives me every single day a boost.” As he says this, he gives credits to his team, which consists out of about sixteen production workers. “A colorful mix of nationalities, to be sure, but a really great team. The team includes employees from Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Portugal, among others. As a result, English is the language we use on the floor.”

## Not Complicated

According to Frank, leadership isn’t really that complicated at all. “It’s not that hard. You just have to be friendly and respect each other. That also means I always ask how people’s weekends went, involve them in decisions, and am clear about what needs to be done.” That approach seems to be working. Turnover in his team is low, and the atmosphere is

good. “Of course, we work hard, but we also laugh a lot. There’s no room for complainers,” says Frank with a smile. “If there’s a problem, we just tell each other.”

## Teamwork

“In fact, we’re one department,” Frank laughs. When warehouse team lead and buddy Sem Burger has a day off, Frank takes over his duties without any problems—and vice versa. Sem and Frank are incredibly in sync with each other.

“Not so surprising, of course, when you work together all day,” Frank continues. “But what makes it special is that we really click. And that means we’re willing to go the extra mile for each other. It’s very simple: if I don’t have something ready on time, the warehouse can’t move forward. And the same goes the other way around. So when necessary, we go the extra mile.”

*“What makes it special is that we really click.”*

# Of course, we work hard, but we also laugh a lot

“That collaboration is only becoming more important now that Geris is continuing to grow. With the arrival of new tempering cells, extra storage space, and further automation, I see plenty of opportunities,” Frank continues. “We’ll soon be able to handle much higher volumes without needing more people.” That might sound technical, but it visibly energizes Frank. “Devising new processes, optimizing internal workflows, further improving procedures, and working smarter. That’s what I love.”

## Borussia, beer, and a horse named Frank

Outside of work, Frank enjoys socializing. He regularly attends matches of Borussia Mönchengladbach, the German soccer club he more or less fell in love with by chance years ago. “I went to watch a game once and loved the atmosphere. I’ve been a regular at the stadium ever since.” He also enjoys meeting up with friends to enjoy a beer.

And at home, his girlfriend Eline is waiting, along with a horse that just happens to be named Frank as well. “No, we didn’t come up with that ourselves,” he laughs. “That name was already in his passport.” The horse officially belongs to Eline, but Frank explains: “If it’s your girlfriend’s hobby, it automatically becomes a bit of your hobby, too.”

## What he almost forgot to mention...

It wasn’t until after the interview that Frank’s perhaps most unique hobby came up. Because in addition to soccer, beer, horses, and “racing,” Frank is actually an

*His pride and joy: a Florett*

enthusiastic collector and passionate mechanic of old mopeds and scooters. In his free time, he happily works with classic models, which he often restores to their former glory all by himself. Of course, he also rides them—in style! With his matching helmet and outfit that perfectly complement his nostalgic two-wheelers, you can’t miss Frank.



Our own Geris truck drivers are on the road every day and, together, cover more kilometers than anyone else. In all weather conditions, they ensure that our products reach customers and suppliers safely and on time. On the Road Again showcases the beautiful sights they see along the way and highlights how they literally keep our organization moving every day.

# MARK KNOBEN BRINGS NEW ENERGY

Photography Eddie Mol

Anyone who talks to Mark Knoben immediately senses his energy, vision, and tremendous drive to build ZZA's future. Although he's been with the company for barely three months, it's as if he's been leading the way of steering the ship of the premium IQF mozzarella brand as commercial manager for years. Drawing on his international experience in Food & Beverages, his entrepreneurial mindset, and his fresh perspective, he aims to lead ZZA into its next phase of growth together with his team.

*"All the ingredients  
are there to help us  
move to the  
next level."*

Mark Knoben  
Commercial Director  
ZZA





# BIG IN JAPAN

“We didn’t have a bank account, no official company, and paid the first salaries with my credit card.”

## WHAT HE LEARNED IN ASIA



**Relationships** are everything



**Trust** comes **before** revenue



**Patience** always wins



**Culture** determines **success**

His ambition is great. “What we’ve achieved here is already incredibly impressive,” Mark begins. “But I also see enormous potential for growth. All the ingredients are there. We have a strong product, a good team, and an open culture. In my opinion, the time is right for us to take the next steps together.”

### From the Ministry of Defense to International Business

Mark’s career didn’t start right away in the food industry. After high school, he first went to work for the Ministry of Defense. For five years, he served in our army, a period during which he was deployed to Afghanistan twice. “That was, of course, a special time,” he says. “I loved the experience and being able to do it, but I actually already knew back then that I ultimately wanted to go into business.”

For that reason, during his time with the Ministry of Defense, he pursued a part-time higher professional education program and was introduced to the business world. After his military service, he eventually ended up at Bavaria, now known as Swinkels. There, he began a fifteen-year career, during which he developed himself from retail associate to Export Manager for Asia. “At Swinkels, I was given the opportunity to truly build a brand and market position,” Mark continues. “From private labels and contract manufacturing to establishing new markets and the teams to support them.”

### Big in Japan

One of the highlights of his career was breaking into the Japanese market for non-alcoholic beer with Bavaria 0.0. “Japan was truly building a business

from the ground up, from scratch,” he says with a beaming smile. “We didn’t have a bank account, no official company, and I paid our employees’ first salaries—literally in cash—thanks to my credit card.” What began as an ambitious plan quickly grew into an extremely successful team with two offices and ten motivated employees. “That entrepreneurial aspect—building something from scratch—is what energizes me. We ultimately succeeded in Japan in becoming the market leader with Bavaria 0.0. That means we’re bigger than Heineken. We’ve never achieved that anywhere else in the world. So I’m still incredibly proud of that. Maybe that’s why I still speak in the ‘we’ form, even though I’ve now fully transitioned to ZZA.” His years in Asia taught him how important relationships, trust, and cultural differences are. “In Asia, everything revolves around relationships. Networking is incredibly important. Sometimes you can’t get in months, until one person—one personal connection—suddenly makes all the difference for you. And that opens the door for the next step.

### A New Challenge at ZZA

Although Mark wasn’t actively looking for something new, his interest was immediately triggered when he was approached by Esmee van Bakel for ZZA. “After fifteen years in the beer industry—in the same sector—I noticed that I was doing a lot on autopilot. So when this opportunity came along, I was immediately curious. I intuitively felt that I should go for it.” Although Food & Beverages are closely related, this is really a whole new industry and product category.

# THE LONG-TERM GOAL

What appealed to him most of all—and right away—was the open culture within the Geris Food Group and, by extension, ZZA. Right away, you can tell it's a flat and open organisation. We work hard, build things together, but also have a lot of fun. I recognize that feeling—and specifically that family feeling—from my time at Swinkels. So when I walked in here for the first time, it immediately felt familiar.”

“With ZZA Mozzarella, we’re part of the Geris Food Group. Within the group, we’re the only company specialized in the production of premium IQF mozzarella. It’s made in the Netherlands, but produced according to an authentic Italian recipe. Our mozzarella is individually quick-frozen (IQF), which ensures that the flavor, texture, and stretch are optimally preserved. We supply high-quality mozzarella worldwide for pizzas, pastas, risottos, salads, and other applications in foodservice and retail. Our focus is on quality, functionality, and the ultimate taste experience,” Mark explains.

## **Growing with a Clear Strategy**

Following an initial introduction, Mark’s immediate focus will be entirely on recalibrating the strategy. “As a team, we need to clearly redefine where we want to go—and more importantly, how we’re going to get there. Growth is essential to remain scalable and to enable the organization to take the next step.” According to Mark, there is significant potential in further broadening and expanding the product

range. The development of new packaging concepts, as well as the introduction of private labels, are logical next steps. “If we’re completely honest, more than half of what we currently do as ZZA can actually already be classified as private label. That’s where our opportunities lie. So we’re looking beyond our standard packaging and are working on developing new packaging.”

“That requires a different way of thinking. When you’re standing in a wholesale store or in front of a freezer surrounded by all kinds of products, appearance definitely makes a difference. We have a fantastic product that’s truly better than almost any other supplier. We’ll just have to make that visible and ‘tangible.’” In addition, he’s actively looking to further expand the portfolio.

“We’re seeing a lot of demand for other forms of mozzarella, such as 2.5-kilo blocks or smaller packages. These are opportunities that could perfectly complement our current IQF product line.”

## **From B2B to a Stronger Brand Experience**

Mark also sees opportunities to position ZZA more strongly toward retail and consumers. “Within our current business model, we focus primarily on B2B. However, retail has a very different dynamic, value proposition, and margin structure. A relatively small share in retail can therefore have a major impact on our overall profitability.” At the same time, the focus

on collaboration within the Geris Food Group remains important. “We need to be willing to develop our own identity and strategy, but also to collaborate smartly. There is an immense amount of knowledge within the group, and working together can only make us stronger.”

## **Working Together and Building Together**

What Mark perhaps values most is the collaboration within the ZZA team. “I strongly believe in building together. You can certainly take a top-down approach to an organization, but ultimately, you achieve the most when you involve people and work toward a common goal together.” He feels that commitment and enthusiasm every day. “In everything we do, you can feel and see that everyone wants to move forward. It’s wonderful to be challenged, to learn from one another, and to have refreshing conversations about strategy and product development.”

“Where we’ll be in five years” Mark doesn’t have to think long about that. “I think we’ll have doubled in volume, partly thanks to a stronger and broader portfolio with a distinctive proposition. That translates into packaging with a powerful look and a prominent position on the frozen food shelf. By then, we may even have secured a place in consumers’ minds.” Within that, one thing is and remains crucial: quality. ZZA distinguishes itself worldwide with premium starch-free mozzarella, an extra-white color, optimal meltability, and maximum stretch—exactly what

professional pizza makers, food professionals, and “foodies” are looking for. “The foundation is there,” Mark laughs. “So how hard can it be? If this is the dot on the horizon, then we’ll be working toward it in the coming years.”

**OUR AMBITION  
IS CLEAR.  
THE PATH  
TOWARD IT  
WE ARE  
BUILDING,  
STEP BY STEP.**

# THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL

Photography Jasper Obdeijn

Wouter Boerekamp and GP Elite embody the values that define Geris. Motorsport is all about teamwork, focus, precision, and delivering results when it matters most, qualities that are equally important in our world. Success is achieved when people, processes, and performance work seamlessly together. Wouter's mindset of hard work, continuous learning, and perseverance perfectly reflects our belief that growth comes from dedication, resilience, and constant self-improvement. That is why we support not only a driver and a racing team, but above all a mentality that inspires us every day: **From Good to Great.**



GP  
ELITE

**In motorsports, everything revolves around milliseconds. Around courage. Around performance under extreme pressure. But sometimes, true success lies precisely in the people who don't need big words. People who stay calm when others lose control. People like Wouter Boerekamps.**

Anyone walking past the GP Elite pit box these days will see a professional Porsche driver competing at the very highest level of international one-make series. What fewer people realise is that his story doesn't begin at Monza, Spa or the Red Bull Ring at all. It begins much closer to home. With hard work, learning, development and, above all, never giving up.

**“HE BUILT HIS CAREER STEP BY STEP. NOT VIA THE QUICKEST ROUTE, BUT VIA THE MOST SUSTAINABLE ONE.”**

#### **From intern to top-level sportsman**

Long before Wouter steered his Porsche 911 GT3 Cup towards the first corner amongst international elite drivers, he was doing an internship within our organisation. No glamour. No champagne. Just working in the operation, learning and getting things done.

And that still defines him today. Whilst many drivers are groomed from a young age for a professional racing career, Wouter chose a different path. He built his career step by step. Not via the quickest route, but via the most sustainable one. And it is precisely because of this that he possesses something that has become rare in top-level sport: perspective.

He knows what it's like to be out of the spotlight. To work hard for opportunities. To be patient when success isn't yet in sight.

#### **The long road to the top**

Wouter was introduced to motor racing at an early age, but his breakthrough did not come in a straight line. For years, he worked behind the scenes as a coach and mentor within GP Elite. According to the team, he fulfilled a variety of roles, from instructor to team support staff, whilst continuing to dream of a return as a professional driver.

And that is what makes his story so special. For whilst others saw their racing careers flourish, Wouter invested in knowledge, experience and personal development. He got to know the sport from the inside out. Not just from the cockpit, but also from the garage, the engineering room and team management. When the opportunity finally arose to race again himself, he was ready.

#### **GP Elite: a Dutch success story**

To understand Wouter's success, you also need to look at GP Elite. Over the past ten years, the Dutch team from De Rijp has developed into one of the most successful Porsche teams in the world. Since its foundation in 2013, GP Elite has racked up championships in the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup, The Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland and various international Porsche series. Within Porsche Motorsport, the team is now regarded as a global benchmark for talent development.



**WOUTER BOEREKAMPS**

**RACING DRIVER PORSCHE CUP**



TOP SPEED

**261**  
KM/H

BEST LAP

**1.35.871**

RPM

**8.500**



THE NETHERLANDS

GP Elite's philosophy is simple: you never win alone. Behind every fast lap are data analysts, mechanics, engineers, coaches and strategists. The team operates like a well-oiled machine in which every link in the chain counts. It is an approach that bears a surprising number of similarities to the food industry. There, too, success is not about a single individual, but about collaboration, precision and continuous improvement.

#### **The year it all came together**

In 2024, Wouter had already shown during a few guest appearances in the Porsche Supercup that he was up to the task. With top-ten finishes at Zandvoort and Monza, he impressed Porsche Motorsport.

But 2025 was the season when everything fell into place. At the iconic Autodromo Nazionale Monza, he secured his first victory in the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup, the premier international Porsche one-make series and the regular support programme for Formula 1. Starting from third on the grid, he worked his way up through the field and made history with his first win at this level.

Another highlight followed a week later. At the Red Bull Ring in Austria, he also won in the Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland. Once again representing GP Elite. Once again against a field full of international top drivers. Porsche even described it as a remarkable victory by a newcomer who completely controlled the race from the front.

To outsiders, it seemed like a sudden success. To anyone who knows Wouter, it felt like the logical reward for years of investing in himself.



Watch the film  
that was shot  
during the  
writing of this  
article.



#### The power of humility

What sets Wouter apart from many other top athletes is not just his speed. It is his attitude. Modest, approachable and anything but the kind of ego you'd expect from a racing driver. He doesn't really feel the need to be constantly in the spotlight, but understands that he does need to make himself known to sponsors and fans from time to time.

In a world where achievements are often celebrated with great fanfare, Wouter remains remarkably calm. Perhaps because he knows how many people contribute to his victories. Perhaps because he understands that success is never a given. Or perhaps because he is simply himself and prefers to celebrate his victories with his team as a team.

***“FOCUS,  
COURAGE,  
CALM AND  
TEAM SPIRIT.  
NOT THE  
QUICKEST  
ROUTE TO  
THE TOP, BUT  
CERTAINLY THE  
MOST  
SUSTAINABLE”***

25

#### GP Elite

Since its foundation in 2013, GP Elite has grown to become one of the most successful Porsche racing teams in the world. The team has won multiple titles in the Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup, as well as in the Porsche Carrera Cup Deutschland and Benelux.

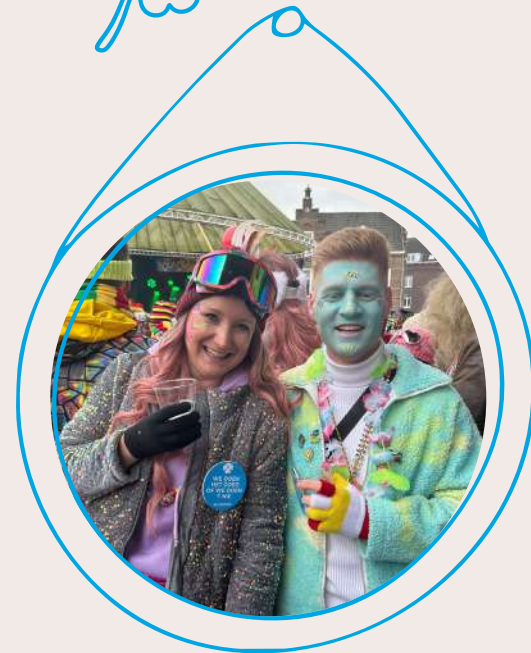
What sets GP Elite apart as a team is a unique combination of elite sport, racing engineering and driver development. Through their own unique 'Motorsport Ladder', they guide talented young drivers from their very first laps on the circuit right up to the highest level of international Porsche racing. The Porsche Mobil 1 Supercup – the regular support series for Formula 1 and the DTM – is regarded as the ultimate goal. It is the series in which Wouter Boerekamps excels at the very highest level.



# Wall of memories



Time for cake!  
Another great step forward with the construction! That certainly calls for a celebratory slice of cake.



We either do it good or we don't. Literally! So during carnival, we went all out at Geris, complete with our own custom-designed buttons.



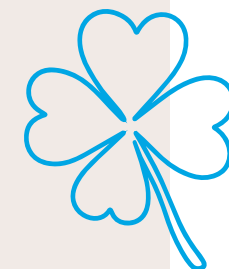
Enjoying time together beyond the workplace. The Marcom and General teams got together for a pleasant dinner at Denz in Eindhoven.



Say Cheese!  
During our visit to Rainbow in Italy, we simply had to try a proper Italian XXL pizza. A tasty way to wrap up a successful visit!



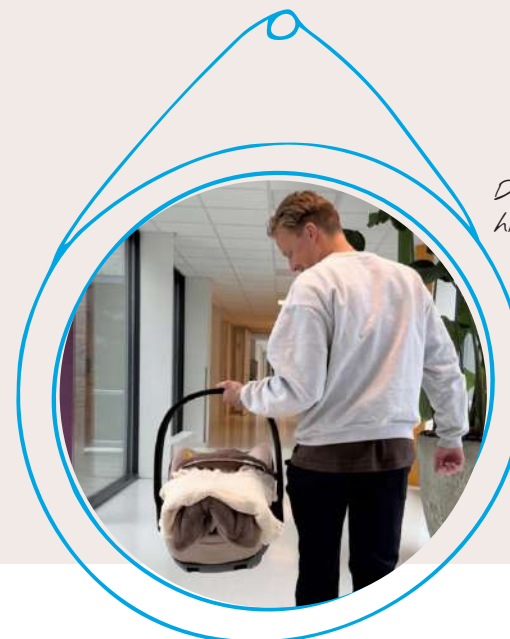
The first edition of Blue, what a milestone!



Teamwork makes the dreamwork.  
During the Streeckhuys BBQ workshop, there was some serious cooking, plenty of tasting and enthusiastic experimentation with delicious dishes.



Racing towards Zandvoort!  
Our colleagues were there at the GP Elite Porsche Cup and enjoyed a day full of action, speed and the thrill of racing.

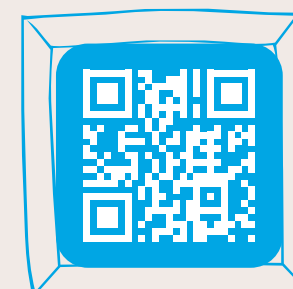


Daan Dekkers with his daughter Rosa.

Follow us on social media! 



@geris\_wemake\_dairywork



Scan the QR code to find out more about Geris Food Group, our vision and our services.



WE MAKE  
DAIRY WORK

#GASEROP



GERIS  
FOOD  
GROUP