

DE HEUS NUTRICIÓN ANIMAL S.A.U. A SOLUTIONS-BASED CULTURE



WE LOOK AT A FAMILY-OWNED ANIMAL FEED COMPANY WITH CENTURIES OF HISTORY BEHIND IT, BUT A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD.

A SOLUTIONS BASED CULTURE

PROJECT MANAGED BY: RASH UDDIN

Royal De Heus is a family-owned company currently in its tenth generation of ownership, dedicated to the feed production industry. In one form or another, the business has existed for over 300 years, but it is over the last 15 years that it has experienced exponential growth, particularly at an international level.

As well as growing as a business, De Heus has also been achieving ever-greater levels of recognition, with the company recently being recognised by the Business Excellence Awards as.

"The Best Animal Nutrition Company" in Spain, and by the European Association of Economy and Competitiveness with the 'European Business Award 2021'. Jean-François Honore, Group CEO Iberia for De Heus, believes the company received these awards due to its unique culture.

"We have a certain unity that is part of our culture," Honore says. "Both awards recognised and highlighted our continued efforts for sustainable solutions for the market. The market is dominated by animal

producers that supply not only the feed but the farms and the slaughtering house. We are not an organisation like that. We are acting on the free market, providing solutions to independent farmers, and we are dedicated to winning them on-side. We received this type of recognition because we are creating added-value for our customers."

Despite, or perhaps because of, the company's three centuries of history, De Heus's focus is firmly on the now, and what comes next.

"We're engaged in the digitalisation, in technical solutions, reducing carbon footprints, generating economical, improved solutions for our customers," Honore says. "That's the spirit we work in."

ANIMAL FEED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

De Heus is not alone, but they are a leading company in an industry-wide shift.

"In the past, most of the players in the industry were extremely focused on the product, which is clearly an important factor," Honore tells us. "But as well as that we are making an investment on the plant side, on the design of the product and the design of the animals' diets and the balance we would like to be effected in the product. We are also investing more and more in delivering entire solutions for our customers' goals. Those goals are not always the same, so we need to show our flexibility and responsiveness."

This means addressing current concerns, and few concerns rate more highly right now than sustainability. As Honore says, "Sustainability is always a core topic. We are constantly looking at the best management of resources >>



Jean-François Honore,
Group CEO Iberia for De Heus.

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For De Heus the issue comes down to how resources are managed, and the company is dedicated to seeking out the most efficient and economical ways to do just that. Sometimes this means getting innovative.

"For example, we have a new approach facilitating set up of robotic machines to milk the dairy cow automatically, because manpower is an issue," Honore says. "You need to support the tasks that have to be completed on the farm. We are probably the leading company in Spain on the technical approach to making use of robots in the countryside. We have a very technical approach to better elevating the quality of resources available on the farm to complete a balanced diet for livestock and decreasing waste

for the best sustainable and economic output."

This is why De Heus boasts its own Research and Development Facilities. However, it is clear talking to Honore that these facilities are not for theoretical or blue-sky research, but for proven solutions.

"It has developed intensive applied technology which means we are able to take advantage of the material, technical improvements coming out of that research," Honore insists. "We are benchmarking new technologies and adapting them to be able to be used in

the field. We are probably not going to be a leading company on the latest breakthrough unknown technology in animal feed, what we can offer is the best technology you can have ready to be used practically in the field."

The company boasts applied technology centres where it carries out extensive testing and is constantly trying alternative solutions, especially in the context of production.

"But we're not dedicated to research on new revolutionary developments," Honore points out.

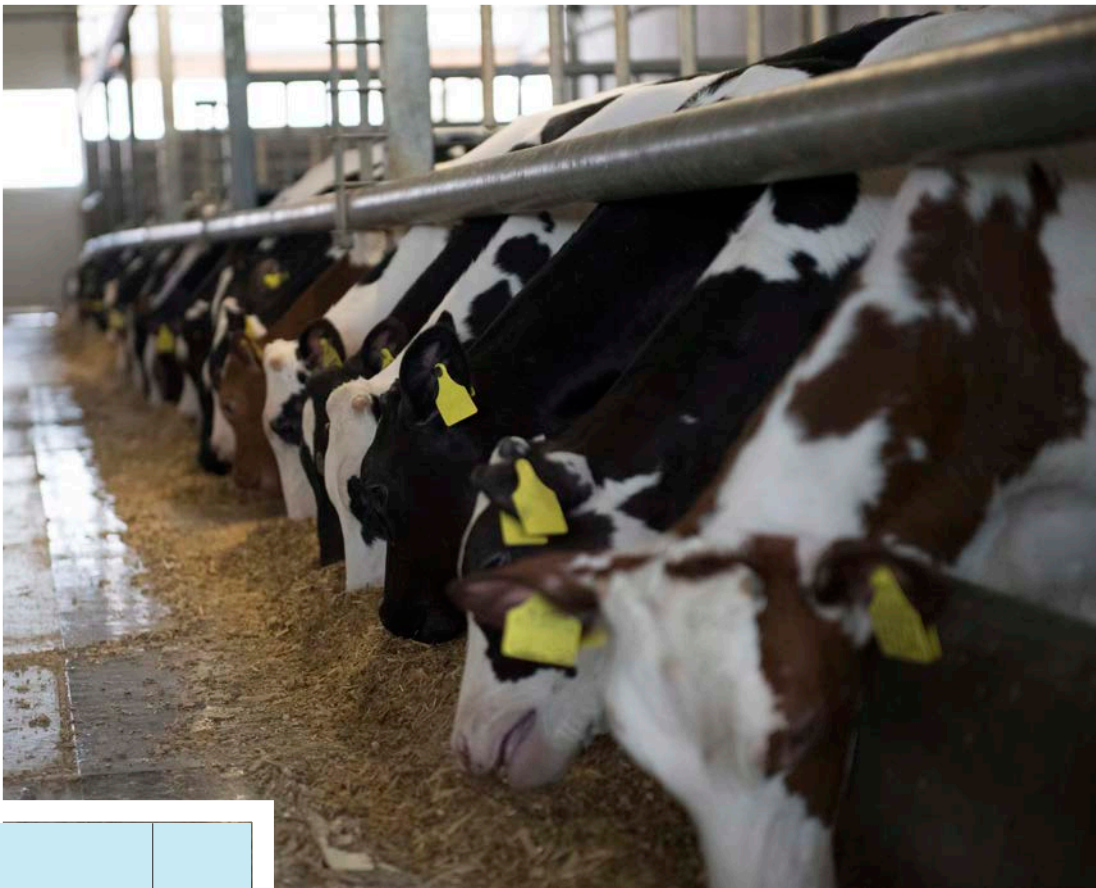
"YOU NEED TO SUPPORT THE TASKS THAT HAVE TO BE COMPLETED ON THE FARM. WE ARE PROBABLY THE LEADING COMPANY IN SPAIN ON THE TECHNICAL APPROACH TO MAKING USE OF ROBOTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE."

A STRONG IDENTITY

In the end, all De Heus's research and development comes back to its core culture and goals, meeting the needs of its customers.

"Overall, in the Spanish territory, our customer frontline team has over 100 technical people, each working to articulate and translate the value proposition of performing technologies for customers," Honore says. "We talk about who we are and describe how we're acting in the market, who we're working with and how we're working with them."

Something that comes through strongly throughout our conversation is De Heus's incredibly strong sense of purpose.



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"We define ourselves by our culture. What is our purpose? What are our guiding principles? We were talking about sustainability, but we are also working on enriching our culture on a daily basis through acquisition and performing organic and inorganic growth," Honore says. "We're built on passion, commitment, and success."

Perhaps unusually though, Honore also points to the importance of failure for a business.

"It means that success is not all you experience all the time. You need failure to learn and re-energise and find the best ways to adapt," he says.

As well as making De Heus an appealing prospect for customers, Honore also believes it is a big part of the company's appeal for new recruits.

"A big piece of our culture is our employee value proposition.

This is still something we're aiming to improve," he says. "We have four dimensions to this proposition, and there is no one more important than the rest. They are all critical. The first is the reputation of the company. We need to be profitable, but how we do things matters. So, reputation is extremely important for us. De Heus has received a Royal certification for companies over 100 years old that have never faced any litigation in the court for bad practices."

As well as reputation, Honore also cites the importance of leadership.

"There are many books about leadership, but we see two important lessons," Honore explains. "One is that to qualify for the leadership you need to look at how you promote people. Great leaders promote great people. That gives you an indication of what kind of leadership you have. Secondly,

leadership could be synthesised as our ability to influence others without authority towards goals as defined as the common good. I believe that this is something that sets our leadership apart."

The third pillar of De Heus's value proposition is in the challenges it offers to its staff.

"These challenges give us the energy to pursue solutions," Honore tells us. "We also give our staff the autonomy to do that."

The final pillar, as important as the other three, is in how staff are rewarded.

"That includes financial compensation, but as well as that it is extremely important to have communication and feedback," says Honore. "We

are very keen to give feedback, articulate what is going well and what needs improvement."

Moving forward, Honore explains that size is critical to allow animal feed businesses to remain in play in this highly competitive sector, but by the same token, size is not enough.

"We need to maintain a certain size to operate in our industry. We are embracing competition and our growth story is about looking for distinctive value rather than massive value, but we're making sure we can bring differences through meaningful collaboration," Honore says. "In this industry, if you don't have a certain size it's hard to play in the market, but how to win is in the quality of your solutions." ☺

"OUR **EMPLOYEE VALUE PROPOSITION** IS A BIG PIECE OF OUR CULTURE."





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