

Fahrenheit warms up in new cold store

Interview with Mathieu Cilia, Project Manager at Famalco

Fahrenheit Logistics Netherlands, part of Famalco, commissioned a new and modern conditioned warehouse and distribution center at the end of 2023: the Famalco House in Breda. It is Famalco's first warehouse outside Malta. That is why Famalco engaged Groenewout to assist and supervise the project from start to finish. "Without their expertise and experience, we definitely would not have managed to realize this new building," says Project Manager Mathieu Cilia.

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Famalco is a family-owned company of Maltese origin, operating in a myriad of sectors – from earthmoving, mobility, retail and hospitality to freight forwarding and logistics. In total, Famalco has 11 entities. For its logistics operations, the company recently established a completely new conditioned warehouse in Breda.



Project manager Mathieu Cilia: "With this box-in-box layout, we can individually adapt our services to the needs of multiple customers while ensuring the most efficient flow of goods."

Through Fahrenheit Logistics, Famalco has been active in the Netherlands for over 20 years. An average of 15 trucks, mainly carrying fresh fruit and vegetables, leave for Malta every week. "We want to grow further and expand our services for existing and new customers. Having our own warehouse and distribution center in the Netherlands is a logical next step," states Mathieu Cilia, who was Project Manager during the realization of the new cold store.

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Search for an experienced and expert project manager

A suitable location for the new premises was found on the Heilaar-Noord industrial estate in Breda. With a total area of 15,000m², the plot offered sufficient space for the plans. "The location is ideal for us: strategically located in the logistics hotspot between Rotterdam, Antwerp and Venlo, and close to major highways for fast connection to the hinterland," Cilia explains.



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Famaico wanted to make the warehouse as flexible as possible and create a multi-tenant building for small to medium-sized customers. Domestically, Famaico has ample experience in handling projects of this kind, but the warehouse in Breda was the organization's first logistics center outside Malta. "That is why we sought a partner with expertise and experience in the logistics sector, as well as knowledge of the local market, to assist us from start to finish in the realization of our new turnkey warehouse," Cilia says. Support was needed primarily in finding a bank to finance the development, attracting one or more tenants, and for on-site project management and supervision of the development itself. The Famaico team first came into contact with Groenewout through their lawyer. According to Cilia, Dutch working methods are quite different from what he is used to in Malta: "Here, a holistic approach is taken, and the project is approached step by step, with control for each step. I learned a lot from that."

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The warehouse features several refrigerated and freezer cells, all with a free storage height of 12 metres.

Maximum flexibility

The resulting warehouse and distribution center is made up of two virtually identical halls of 3,500m² (Warehouse A and Warehouse B). Both warehouses include an area of refrigerated cells and freezer cells and have a free storage height of 12 meters. The facility also offers 1,300m² of office space. This can be subdivided into 16 smaller units, each with their own entrance and a view of the logistics operation. "With this box-in-box layout, we can individually adapt our services to the needs of multiple customers while ensuring the most efficient flow of goods," Cilia states. "The facilities complement each other and maximize the cost-efficient use of space." In keeping with Maltese tradition, the warehouse has also been given a name: Famalco House.

Concrete vs steel

By the time Groenewout was approached, the plot had been purchased, the developer/contractor had been engaged and the building permit had been granted. Groenewout optimized the design at a detailed level. For instance, a waste area was integrated, some columns were adjusted to enable smoother logistics processes, and the insulation between the area and the offices above was improved.

Groenewout also sought a second contractor to benchmark construction costs.

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“The plan at hand was based on a concrete construction: heavy and robust, but also taking up more space. In Malta, we’re used to concrete constructions, so this was a logical, sustainable choice for us,” Cilia explains. A second option was a steel construction. Steel appeared to be cheaper, and the construction would offer more space. “That gave us reason to change our preference,” Cilia continues. “However, during the negotiation period, energy and steel prices rose to such an extent that our preference once again shifted, and we eventually opted for concrete.”



Customers can also rent their own office space in the new warehouse. This way, they are close to the processes without having to invest in material handling equipment, IT infrastructure, security and other shared services themselves.

Perfect partner

On top of sharply rising raw material prices, the project team faced Covid restrictions. “That made it even more complex. Proper coordination between all parties was more important than ever,” states Cilia. “Fortunately, with Groenewout we had the perfect partner at our side. The collaboration was constructive and realistic. That gave us peace of mind and confidence, and had a positive impact on all construction parties,” he adds.

The project manager knows from experience that good communication is key.

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He found the open and direct communication with Groenewout to be extremely pleasant: "They are proactive, and give honest advice that is well thought-out, based on facts and data, and always with realistic comparison material."

BREEAM Very Good rating

The result aligns perfectly with Famalco's Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) philosophy and has been awarded the BREEAM Very Good rating. One factor that contributed to achieving this certification level was the company's investment in solar panels which offset the cold store's entire energy needs. "We actually installed considerably more panels than were required for the BREEAM certificate. We prefer to do things right first time" Cilia explains. As an additional advantage, due to the chosen concrete construction, the roof structure did not need to be reinforced for the installation of the solar panels.

The building was completed in spring 2023 and handed over to Famalco immediately after the summer. "The entire project was realized in less than a year, exactly as promised by Groenewout," Cilia confirms.

Promising future

Famalco House is equipped with a modern security system and an advanced building management system. Storage, cross-docking and forwarding activities are already being provided for the first customers, but there is still sufficient refrigerated, frozen, and non-conditioned capacity available for third parties. Cilia: "For this reason, we have intentionally not yet finalized Warehouse A. We want to offer our clients maximum flexibility and tailor the finishing touch optimally to their wants and needs." Customers can also rent their own office space in the new warehouse. This way, they are close to the processes without having to invest in material handling equipment, IT infrastructure, security and other shared services themselves.

Cilia is convinced that the new warehouse will enable further growth. "The future looks promising. Without Groenewout's expertise, we could never have achieved this," he concludes. "They are all specialists in their own fields, working together under one roof and with one single goal: the best result for the client."

More information

If you would like more information about this project, please contact Mari van Kuijk at vankuijk@groenewout.com or via tel. +31 76 533 04 40. For more information about Fahrenheit Logistics, go to <https://famalco.net/>

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About the author

Mark Dohmen has been working as a journalist in the logistics sector for 25 years. After studying Logistics Management, he worked as an editor at the trade publications *Transport+Opslag*, *Logistiek* and *Logistiek.nl* and was editor-in-chief of *Logistiek Totaal* and *Warehouse Totaal*. He is currently working as a freelancer, including producing articles and videos for *logisticsinside.nl* and *logisticsinside.eu*.