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Green agenda
**Creating
opportunities**

Country
New Zealand

FloraCulture International

January-February 2018

Theme

Sustainability



Loyal to our roots

Royal Lemke's
Michiel de Haan & Elise Wieringa



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Preface

Sustainability, a world of opportunities

Sometimes we are victims of our own convictions. For decades we considered the pressure from society to produce and sell sustainable products a real threat. “Troublesome” eco-activists were perceived to be hindering company profits. There are at least three reasons to reconsider this conviction. First: we have to pass the Earth onto our children and grandchildren. Second: our buyers only want to buy our products if they can do so with a clear conscience. And third: sustainability brings new opportunities for our industry. This issue of FloraCulture International describes various aspects of sustainability. And you know us, we were on the lookout for new opportunities and we found them. We hope you will find them, too.

Also in this edition we take a look at Australia’s floral situation. And don’t forget to read the info about the International Grower of the Year (at IPM Essen, January 23 2018).

Again we tried to make your reading FloraCulture International worthwhile. Let us know what you think at: info@floracultureinternational.com

FCI Team

Contents

Minds



Combining our push and our customers’ pull

Royal Lemkes is one of the Netherlands’ leading wholesale companies, working with large-scale retailers all over Europe. Their clients have specific thoughts about sustainability. But Royal Lemkes has its own on the issue, as well. What about Royal Lemkes’ sustainability policy?

29 Cover story

Sustainability, an African issue

Meanwhile in Africa: How do local floral entrepreneurs cope with sustainability challenges?

Columns



Fred van Tol explains how opinions on sustainability influence his purchasing behaviour (and the purchasing behaviour of others).



John Ingwersen writes about sustainability in his own nursery.



Gijs Kok, Royal FloraHolland’s Manager on sustainability issues knows about opportunities in floral sustainability.

Meetings



2020 Vision has an ambitious plan to enlarge Australian urban green space by 20% by 2020. That looks to be quite a challenge. Why are the Australians doing this and how will they accomplish it?

14 **Getting together**

Green Agenda, creating opportunities from sustainability issues

Dutch research institute and floral entrepreneurs join forces to benefit from opportunities that arise from sustainability. What are the opportunities and how can they be marketed? Jelle Hiemstra (Wageningen University & Research) gives an overview of this topic.

16 **Feature**

Better to love nature than end up a patient

Tjisse Brookman, who worked for a health insurance company for years, is convinced of the positive effect of greenery on people's health and well-being.

Markets



Australia. Warm. Large. Not densely populated. Prosperous. But what about the floral industry?

20 **Continent: Australia**

Different continent, similar challenges

John and Anthony Tesselaar, analyse floral activities on the Australian mainland.

22 **Country: New Zealand**

The problems of a grower's utopia

What flowers and plants are grown in New Zealand? What about exports, home sales, auctions and markets? We answer these questions.

24 **City: Invercargill**

Floral passion in Invercargill

Invercargill is the southernmost city on New Zealand's South Island and one of the most southern cities in the world. It is remote from production areas of Europe, Africa and Latin America. It is even remote from the densely populated parts of the country. But florists are everywhere because people love flowers all over the world, like Anna Blackler of Tudor House Flowers.

30 **Up close**

Creating sustainability by creating continuity

Sustainability is not only about caring for people and saving the planet. It's People, Planet, Profit. Jay Williams from Kenya reconstructed his company to make it future-proof. Read his story about sustainability.

32 **Case**

Creating indoor nature

Art aqua, a German company, is greening buildings all over Europe. We wondered how they do this and what prospects this opens for plant growers?



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Being an optimist

I have many reasons to consider myself an optimist. I lead a happy life with my family and friends. I work in an absolutely great industry. Whenever possible, I go outside to enjoy our lovely nature. I know many of you do, too. So I think caring for our environment is of great importance.

Being an optimist influences me in how I look at personal problems and world problems. Always look on the bright side of life. Of course I've had my disappointments. Sometimes things turned out different than I expected. But I remain an optimist.

My view on the sustainability challenges of this generation is basically optimistic. I consider these challenges severe. It will take much human effort and skill to continue life on this planet as we know it. But it is vital to do so because I want my children and future generations to enjoy the beauty of nature and especially the beauty of flowers and plants. I think we are moving in the right direction, in part because our consumers want us to do so. There is a growing plea to save our environment, a demand for labels guaranteeing products are being produced according to regulations.

I have seen the floral industry come a long way on these issues. In my youth, growers were advised to spray chemical preservatives to be sure no disease or plague would ruin their crop. With a lot of R&D efforts we diminished the use of chemical crop

protectants. Using new initiatives and innovations made us reduce our energy consumption. Our carbon footprint has improved over the past few decades. Still, there is much to be achieved. Science is making great strides and it is only a matter of time before improved initiatives will be introduced.

Sustainability is the theme of this edition of FloraCulture International. What strikes me is that I am not the only optimist around when it comes to this subject. Sustainability provides great opportunities for the industry. We can help society get greener, healthier, even friendlier, so it appears.

Don't get me wrong. I am aware of the problems and the dilemmas of breeders, growers, wholesalers, retailers, garden centres and florists in reaching the sustainability level they should. But there are increasingly more examples of green entrepreneurs finding sustainable ways of working and more services to help them.

So yes, I am optimistic that we can all enjoy the beauty of our planet far into the future.

Fred van Tol

Manager International Development at
Royal FloraHolland

Getting together



Greening Australian cities together



Normally on this page you read about people working together to achieve their goals. This time it's a different story. It is the entire horticultural industry of Australia cooperating in 2020 Vision and greening all Australian cities. This is quite ambitious as 2020 Vision wants to expand Australian urban green space 20% by the year 2020.

2020 Vision has eight reasons for greening Australian cities. There is people's health and well-being, benefitting from parks and other urban green spaces. It's a fact that green spaces are more successful in pre-existing green environments. People are more likely to meet in green environments; they even have more fun shopping in streets with large trees. Of course, there are sustainability issues. Trees reduce temperatures by up to 8°C, reducing air conditioner usage and carbon emissions by an estimated 12–15% per annum. Trees diminish the usage of water; they remove air pollution and the larger the tree, the more air pollution is removed. And last, but not least: time spent in nature has been proven to have a positive effect on children's behaviour. Everywhere in the world there is ample reason to expand urban green spaces but in Australia, with its warm climate, there is even more reason.

2020 Vision created a nationwide network of governmental and private organisations and individuals from the green industry to make their initiative succeed. They researched why they should green their cities and how to accomplish this. They used their network to collect and disseminate practical information on every aspect of expanding urban green spaces. What plants can you use where? How about soil and composting, about overcoming barriers to improving a park, about talking with green industry professionals in their own jargon. But they also deliberated how to create an urban forest and a community action plan.

2020 Vision started in 2014 and has come a long way. The greatest achievement is probably the awareness it has created. Millions of Australians have come into contact with the ideas behind creating more urban green space. Millions of them are now convinced that more urban green space is the answer to many ecological, economic and social problems. It helped the flower and plants industry be more relevant to society. It set an example for the world about how to green your urban environment together. Another achievement is that real projects to improve and expand Australian urban green have begun implementation.

2020 Vision is showing the world what the value of green can be by using one of the industry's best elements: cooperation.

*Millions of Australians
have come into contact
with the ideas behind
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green space.*



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The advantages of getting older

If you've been watching the news, you may have heard that California is experiencing its trial by fire. To be sure, this isn't all that extraordinary (seems that we're either burning or flooding here, and if neither of those we're shaking...or being taxed to death).

However, with the Lilac Fire Jungle Jacks came very close to disaster. A shift in wind direction saved the day for us, but unfortunately not for quite a few others. A good friend lost a production yard that will take a couple years to fully bring back on line, among many others who lost homes and businesses. Needless to say we are very thankful. Mother nature is an amazing thing, but when she turns capricious one realizes just how insignificant we are when compared to nature at work.

Some of you may remember a column I wrote a few years ago regarding the trend towards sustainability in horticulture. While I can't say that I openly mocked the concept, I have to admit I was at the very least somewhat skeptical. And to some degree, I still am. For your average consumer, sustainability is pretty much a pipe dream (in my humble opinion). However, as producers who purchase and consume large quantities of natural materials, e.g. peat moss, coco coir, plastic, water, fertilizers, chemicals, etc., sustainability does have more than a small degree of relevance. To that extent, our decisions as producers can be highly impactful.

The most obvious example (at least to my simple mind) is coir. I'd go into the origins of this but I'll make the assumption that most in this audience are far more knowledgeable than I on this. Suffice it to say, it can be used as an extremely effective replacement for peat moss, 100% of which is harvested from age-old bogs in the high latitudes of the northern hemisphere. I don't think there's any argument in this case as to which is

more sustainable. And, as a grower, coir is generally the better product anyway. Net result – win-win for the environment. Over the past 5 years we've moved from about 20% coir (vs. peat) to over 60% and intend to increase that percentage. We also used as much recycled plastic content as possible, but admittedly, we are dependent on the producers in this area. It would certainly seem that nursery containers are an obvious use for recycled plastic and I'd like to see more of it.

Water is the biggest wild card. Depending on your geography, it can be a minor detail or something that keeps you up at night, but beyond a doubt in the coming decades water (or lack thereof) will be a major impact to our industry. This is one particular facet of our industry for which sustainability will become an absolute necessity as opposed to an abstract choice. In southern California, micro-irrigation is already a way of life. Over 75% of our production is irrigated this way and the goal is to get to close to 90%. And believe me, we're not just doing this because it's environmentally friendly. Water in California is not cheap, so the economic motivation is already very keen.

Having looked at all this in its totality, I think it becomes apparent that sustainability simply for the sake of sustainability is relatively meaningless. Rather, the ultimate drivers are business utility, i.e., qualitative and financial results. Those are the motivators that will ultimately make sustainability into a way of life as opposed to a buzzword.

About the writer...

John Ingwersen graduated with a degree in marketing from Georgetown University in 1990, and founded Jungle Jack's, Inc. in 1995.



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For the third year in a row, the Netherlands is hosting a very special event: the Tulip Trade Event. Breeders and exporters are opening their doors for three days, and the spotlight will focus on tulips, with their long history and flourishing future.

In 2018 we would be happy to give you an update of the latest state of affairs in the tulip sector. What new cultivation methods have been developed? Which forms and colours are trendy? And which varieties are promising?

As the nurseries are concentrated in one region, you can get a complete, colourful and flourishing idea in those three days. The purpose of the Tulip Trade Event supports the continuously growing interest in the ultimate spring flower.

Are you going to be joining us again? We look forward to seeing you!



A man with glasses and a green jacket stands in a park with autumn foliage. The background shows a path, trees with yellow leaves, and a body of water. The foreground has grass and fallen leaves.

Green Agenda, creating opportunities from sustainability issues



Society and government organisations are beginning to see the benefits of a greener world.”

Jelle Hiemstra
Senior investigator at Wageningen
University & Research



Many horticultural entrepreneurs see sustainability issues as a threat. Environmentalists sometimes demand unreasonable things from growers, wholesalers and florists. But in the Netherlands the organisation Green Agenda is researching opportunities sustainability can bring to the floral industry. Jelle Hiemstra, a senior investigator at Wageningen University & Research and a steering committee member of Green Agenda, has the story.


“Green Agenda knows that a green environment (in- and outdoors) contributes to the health and well-being of people. There is more and more proof of this, a growing awareness of the benefits of greening. There is money to be made if this knowledge is shared with companies and they incorporate it into their business model. Knowledge, know-how, profits: that’s the story.”

“Green Agenda is an initiative of Royal FloraHolland, GreenCity (a Dutch growers’ organization of nursery stock and flower bulbs and gardeners and landscapers) and Wageningen University & Research in a public-private partnership (PPP). Whatever money the industry puts into research, the Dutch government doubles. This has enabled Green Agenda to start a research programme. For instance, to measure the effects of a green environment on the medical and psychological well-being of people. Or the effect of indoor greening on the quality of air in office buildings. Some of this research leads to concrete action. Like the Tergooi Hospital in Hilversum that created a chemo garden, a green environment for people being treated for cancer. It appears this space has a positive effect on their treatment.”

“Green Agenda focuses on the positive effects of greening (which of course also includes flowers and indoor greenery)

on living, working, learning and recovery. It has published several fact sheets about the benefits of greening (which you can read in English at: www.royalfloraholland.com). People are healthier in a green environment. They will pay fewer visits to their doctor with health problems like diabetes, coronary heart disease or depression. They perform better at work and school. A study shows that in the Netherlands alone, 400 million euros can be saved on healthcare costs by greening the environment. It also appears that people take better care of their personal living environment when it contains well-maintained greenery. Hospital patients that view a green world recover faster than patients that only view an urban environment. Additionally, greening has benefits including combatting urban heat island effect and worldwide climate change. Moreover, there are plants that can purify the air in your room, your office or your classroom.”

“Green Agenda benefits from a high level of interest. Society and government organisations are beginning to see the benefits of a greener world. And of course there are certain milestones like the Paris treatment. The challenge for the horticultural industry is to create concepts to redeem the promise of greening for a more sustainable society. The problem in horticulture is that the industry is too divided. Therefore, it is hard to find companies to invest in green innovations, thus adapting to the benefits that I know exist. Green Agenda is trying to create coalitions and provide information and knowledge for new concepts but it is necessary that companies participate in these projects. The Green Agenda project finishes at the end of 2018 but we are convinced that we should continue past that deadline. We need more concrete concepts and real action from the green industry to actualize the benefits sustainability offers us.”



Better to love nature than end up a patient

“Investing in a green environment is an investment for yourself and your health. Man is part of nature. Nature helps man get rid of stress and relax. I want to make people aware of that fact.”

Tjisse Brookman is not some obscure environmentalist.

For decades (and until recently) he worked for a Dutch health insurance company as their Relations Manager. “Individually or with partners I looked for added value for our company, our clients, partners and society as a whole. It’s an insurer’s social responsibility to encourage people to go outdoors because it is better for their health and a positive outlook. It’s better to love nature than end up a patient. Being more active and, thus, healthy is good for them as individuals, for society as a whole and for the insurer. Our company wishes to add value to our clients’ policies without being overbearing. In doing so there is a connection between nature and health.”

“A green environment adds to people’s health, vitality and well-being. So it also leads to lower health costs although it is not easy to quantify that in insurance premiums. It will reduce the chance, for instance, of diabetes or chronic obstructive respiratory disease but also conditions related to stress. As an example, walking in nature has a positive influence on combatting burnout. Why? There are several possible reasons for this phenomenon.

Trees give off phytoncides that stimulate the operation of our immune system. And because nature provides us with fractal patterns, it lulls the brain into a restful state thus creating the capacity for renewed creativity and taking on new challenges.

We do not know what nature does exactly or which specific diseases are counteracted by a green environment. But we do know that there are positive effects and some of these are very specific. Take, for instance, the fact that some plants purify the air inside a room and think of the possibilities this creates for hospitals, offices, classrooms and homes. There is already a group of growers adapting their output to this knowledge (see also www.airsopure.nl). I think growers should be aware of the possibilities and work together in order to create green concepts with commercial value. And at the same time do what they can to contribute to the better health and well-being of humanity.”

“A green environment adds to people’s health, vitality and well-being”

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The chances of greening the planet

The horticultural industry has often treated sustainability as a threat because of demands, imposed by society or retailers and governmental rules. But we should not forget the commercial chances that arise from sustainability issues. It appears that in many ways a greener world is a better world. Our industry has the ability to green the world in a profitable way.



With plants in a class-room pupils learning achievements improve by 20%.

7%

With plants in a classroom pupils have 7% less health complaints.

20%

Integrating school gardens in learning programmes lead to more pupil activities.

Greenery and learning

At green schoolyards there is much less destruction.



An average street tree catches the same amount of fine particles caused by a car traveling for 55 kilometers.

2°C

Facade green, green in front yards and street trees can lower the street temperature up to 2°C.

Greenery in the living environment

Buildings with green facades and roofs are better insulated, less expensive to be heated and cooled and less stressful for its users.

Planting trees, shrubs and perennials lead to more biodiversity.



15%

4%

In urban areas a 10% increase of greenery can diminish the urban heating effect up to 0.6°C.

During periods of extreme heat the temperature in parks is up to 5°C lower than in urban centres.

5°C

Parks have a cooling impacts on nearby neighbourhoods (measurable to 700 metres).

The value of houses rises by 4 to 15% when there is greenery in the nearby surroundings.

Continent
Country
City



Different continent, similar challenges

The Australian climate allows most types of flowers to be grown



John and Anthony Tesselaar

The Australian continent has a surface area of roughly 80% of continental Europe. But Europe has 731 million inhabitants and Australia just over 23 million. So you can imagine large parts of Australia are empty and this has influenced the floral industry. With the help of John and Anthony Tesselaar, who worked in the Australian flower and plant business their entire lives, we tried to analyse floral activities on the Australian mainland.

THE CHALLENGES OF A LARGE COUNTRY

The Australian climate allows most types of flowers to be grown. But the country is large and not very densely populated. So the domestic market is not large enough to be able to grow the quantities you need to be efficient. And of course there are transport challenges.

Most Australian flowers are grown in Victoria and New South Wales, in the southeastern part of the country. There is production of tropical flowers (heliconia, ginger) in Queensland but Orchids and foliage are mainly imported from Southeast Asia.

Kenyan rose imports have decimated the domestic rose production. On a wholesale level, 20% of all flowers sold in Australia are imported (mainly from Kenya, Ecuador and Asia and, to a lesser degree, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Vietnam). Imports are expected to rise as there is no promotion whatsoever of domestic products.

AVERAGE PRODUCTS FOR AVERAGE PRICES

There are some large nurseries in Australia, but most nurseries are relatively small. Flowers like lilies and lisianthus are grown in plastic houses or greenhouses. Summer flowers like Limonium and strawflowers are grown in the field. In general, Australian growers have excellent technical skills but the costs of growing are high. There is only one auction which means there is no comprehensive quality policy nor any promotion. So it is hard for Australian growers to distinguish themselves with premium quality and it is even harder to get a premium price for producing this quality. So most growers focus on average products for average prices and this development is strengthened by the fact that supermarkets have been gaining ground in floral sales while taking market share from florists.

Grading is a problem and the price difference between excellent and average flowers is too small, which is being reinforced by an oversupply. Pre-treatments are not always being done the way they should.

All flowers are sold through flower markets, suburban

wholesalers or delivered overnight by growers directly to shops. Some florists pick up their flowers directly from flower farms. This probably doesn't sound very efficient and it isn't. A distribution company sources all flowers for supermarkets, both local and imported.

NO COOPERATION, NO EXPORTS

Likely because of Australia's size there is hardly any cooperation between growers. As previously mentioned, there is only one small auction in Queensland. There is hardly any attention or support for the floral industry from the Agricultural Department. So it is difficult to innovate and it is virtually impossible to popularize flowers and plants, since there is hardly any backing. Amazingly enough, so insiders say, flowers sales have been on the rise in recent years. But it is not the traditional florist who benefits from this positive development, it's the supermarket and the online florists. Most flowers are sold on traditional flower days like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and Christmas. Other flower days like Chinese New Year and International Women's Day are of minor importance.

Australia is a prosperous country and flowers and plants could take a more dominant position than they currently do. But Australia is also a high-wage country and therefore local production is expensive. And since there is limited local production, Australia cannot compete with low-wage countries in Africa and Latin America. As in many countries, supermarkets and online florists have displaced the traditional florist. There is a chance that through this development, supermarkets could make the industry more efficient and online florists could help promote the product better than it is currently.



The problems of a grower's utopia

New Zealand could be a grower's utopia. Its climate enables growing virtually any kind of flower. It is a prosperous country whose people like flowers. And it is quite strict on importing flowers and plants. Still, the number of growers dropped from 1400 several years ago to around 500–600 today. What's the matter with this grower's utopia?

New Zealand used to be a large floral exporter. Bruce O'Brien remembers it well. He is the CEO of United Flower Growers (UFG), New Zealand's largest flower marketing entity with auctions and markets all over the country. "Today we cannot compete with low-wage countries," Bruce says. "We do grow considerable numbers of Hydrangea, Calla, Peonies, etc. But since our dollar rate has remained quite high, exporting is difficult. As an organisation we do not auction many imported flowers, but since import flowers are a reality they are sold at our markets and we combine them with local flowers in mixed bouquets. The strict conditions on importing flowers are not always of great benefit as you can never be completely sure what products will be offered. On the other hand, it gives New Zealand growers new opportunities, for instance growing other product groups that are not imported. As an organisation we also emphasize the importance of

a wide assortment. There are plenty of opportunities to grow what the Dutch call 'summer flowers'. Nowadays we have plenty of Roses, Lilies and Gerberas, but we lack true niche products."

Many New Zealand growers have closed their businesses in recent years. There are few young people who are starting out as growers or taking over their parents' nursery. So many growers have now reached retirement age. As a consequence of New Zealand urbanisation, many have offers to sell their land and most do. UFG tries to stimulate the industry, not only because we like to but because someone in the industry needs to try to," Bruce says. "We try to keep older growers in business by helping them find better opportunities to market their flowers and, at same time, we are looking for ways to bring young growers into the business by researching best practices to assist them."



The situation of the New Zealand floral business is quite peculiar. "Due to our geographic isolation we are not enormously influenced by the rest of the floral world. Developments with only limited international success can have tremendous influence here, but the reverse applies, as well. One thing is for certain: as a marketing organisation we have a massive responsibility for maintaining our local industry and we do acknowledge this responsibility. By informing, inspiring and stimulating our growers, we help them take chances."

UFG is a grower-owned organisation. Its objective is to promote, market and distribute flowers and foliage around the country. Growers can rest assured their products are being offered in the right marketplace at the right time to secure the best possible price. Bruce O'Brien added, "We have strengthened ourselves by merging and buying out competitors. UFG has auctions in Auckland and Wellington (both on the North Island) and in Christchurch (South Island) but it has a sophisticated Remote Buying system with live

images from the auction hall that enable buyers all over the country to purchase fresh flowers. By creating this system and good transport facilities we have increased the impact of our auction clocks. On top of that we have various wholesale markets on the North and South Islands, so local florists can have their pick of fresh flowers, too."

"UFG is trying to make a difference for the New Zealand floral industry by creating favourable sales and promotion conditions for our grower members, but also by stimulating them and keeping our industry alive and vibrant."

By informing, inspiring and stimulating our growers, we help them take chances."

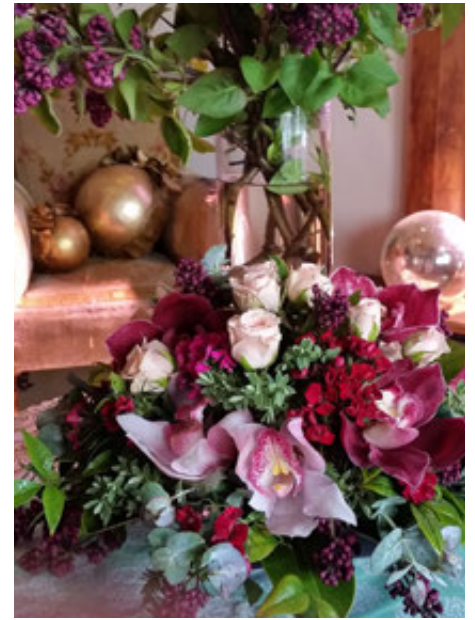
Bruce O'Brien
CEO of United Flower Growers (UFG)





Floral passion in Invercargill

Hardly any other city in the world is situated further south than Invercargill. You will find Invercargill, its harbour and 50,000 inhabitants near the southernmost tip of New Zealand's South Island. It is a farming centre, but tourism is a major income source, too. What is it like to be a florist in southern New Zealand? Florist Anna Blackler of Tudor House Flowers knows.



“Our style is contemporary with bohemian influences”

“I have always had a passion for flowers. At our family home and garden there were always flowers. It has been an important part of my life since childhood. So when I had the chance to become a florist I took it.”

“Invercargill is a relatively small city founded by the Scots. In the sixties many Dutch immigrants came to live here and in recent years many young people from Asia came here to study. So you will find a variety of consumer preferences. There are lovers of Carnations and lovers of Lilies and everything in-between. We service the whole mix of these preferences. There is quite a substantial business and local market in our shop and online. We belong to the Interflora Pacific Unit receiving and sending flowers nationwide and internationally.”

“Tudor House Flowers Shop is located in a hundred-year-old villa, which is very old for New Zealand. We see ourselves as a boutique flower shop with quality floristry. We

sell fresh flowers, potted plants, some artificial arrangements and giftware. We specialize in bouquets and floral arrangements using fresh flowers. Our style is contemporary with bohemian influences. But of course what we want to make and what we have to make is what our customers want. And we are not without competition. There are other flower shops and supermarkets selling flowers and plants. We think we can compete by selling quality, upscale floristry; contemporary floral art in fresh flowers. Our climate can be as grey as the Dutch or Scottish endure so many customers prefer bright bouquets to counterbalance it, but all-white and pastel bouquets are popular, too.”

“In Invercargill there is a flower market of United Flower Growers Ltd. UFG has markets in other New Zealand cities. Our market is open five days a week and gets fresh flowers three times a week. I buy from other city markets as well and receive them the next day.

That gives me ample opportunity to buy fresh flowers. Many flower varieties are grown locally. We get Standard chrysanthemums from the USA and roses from Latin America. So although I cannot buy the variety my European or American colleagues can, there is still a wide assortment of flowers and plants available to me.”

“The type of floral art you make depends on what customers like and, of course, what flowers are available. But I try to remain up-to-date as a florist. I am a member and Director of Interflora and I do quite a few Interflora orders. I attend workshops and meet colleagues when traveling so I can follow what they do. On top of that we have young staff on our team and keep up with current trends. This is important to keep Tudor Flower House young at heart.”

Combining our push and our customers' pull

"The planet is asking for it. We want it. And our clients are requesting it. That's why Royal Lemkes is working on sustainability issues," says Managing Director Michiel de Haan.

“Sustainability is not just a word,
it has always been a conviction.”

Royal Lemkes is a large, Dutch wholesale company, specializing in plant sales to sizable European retailers. Michiel de Haan and Elise Wieringa (Quality Assurance & Sustainability) told us how their company approaches sustainability.

BOTTOM UP

“Some twenty Royal Lemkes employees from a cross section of the organisation looked at the issue of sustainability. We decided that our impetus should be what we want to achieve as a company, what our customers want and what the planet needs. So we formulated six themes. Three of them, climate, raw materials and biodiversity, are ecologically-oriented. The other three, well-being/health/society, labour conditions in the supply chain and our own employees, are people-oriented.”

LOYAL TO OUR ROOTS

“Royal Lemkes has a green heart with three ingredients: a grower’s history since 1882, lots of knowledge about plants and a sustainable heart. For our current owner, Cees van der Meij, and his predecessor, Hans Lemkes, sustainability is not just a word, it has always been a conviction. So we do not strive for maximum profits but rather sufficient profit to keep our company running and innovative. The impact of what we do for our employees, our customers and the planet is at least as important as our profit. This is who we are. Thus, our slogan is ‘Let’s plantify® the future. Together.’

We believe in plants because they brighten up lives, strengthen the business of our trading partners and contribute to a sustainable world. Therefore, we feel privileged to work in this industry.”

FASTER THAN THE SLOWEST ONE

“We believe in cooperation and we also believe in leadership. If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together. But going with the entire group gets us nowhere. So we create coalitions, for example with fellow wholesale companies Dutch Flower Group, Waterdrinker and FleuraMetz and with Royal FloraHolland. This collaboration helps us go faster. Together we have enough weight and ambition to get things going. We have signed a Manifesto to speed up the industry’s sustainability policy and organized sessions

for growers in which we inspired and informed them, offered our help and asked for their commitment. We also participate in the Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI). In 2020, FSI wants 90% of all flowers and plants to come from reliable sources. This means they have a certificate from the FSI basket of standards (GAP or equal, supplemented for producers from high-risk countries in Africa and Latin America with a social compliance certificate). Sometimes plans do not actualize so it falls on ethical entrepreneurs to be transparent about this. Sometimes you cannot get things done on your own so you need to ask for help: from customers, suppliers, government agencies or NGO’s focussed on environmental or labour issues. We consider them partners, not enemies. They keep us on our toes. Sometimes we use their knowledge, sometimes they use ours. But in the end, we have the same objectives.”

A NORMAL PLANNING CYCLE

“We did what any decent company does during a planning cycle: define the goals of all sustainability themes (for 2020), define plans and monitor our achievements. On the basis of our beliefs, we try to stimulate our customers to act sustainably and many of our customers stimulate us, as well. We have the privilege of supplying major European retailers such as IKEA, KingFisher and Aldi, who want to be frontrunners in sustainability. This is incredibly cool because we combine our push with their pull.”

GREEN PARC ENERGY, SUSTAINABILITY IN PRACTICE

A very practical example of Royal Lemkes’ sustainability policy is apparent in Green Parc Energy. The roof of the Bleiswijk Royal Lemkes building is full of solar panels, generating electricity. The energy that is not used is stored in a huge battery next to the building. Employees can buy this electricity thus lowering their personal carbon footprint. To date, almost 50 of the 180 employees have signed up for this initiative.



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Sustainability, an African issue

Although some European growers still believe their African counterparts are not well-informed on sustainability, sustainable production is high on agendas in countries like Kenya.

Nearly every Kenyan farm has any certificate their customers might request, an expert told us. So their eyes are open, although it is hard to see if these certificates are only an obligation or the result of internal conviction. But the certificates depend on solid checks which are then often double-checked by European retailers.

The sustainability issue in Kenya may be primarily market-driven, but the issue gets extra attention in production and transport. The variety of labels worries many Kenyans too, and there is always a risk that retailers will put further demands on sustainability issues which would lead to more complexity and pressure on resources. Another risk is that growers won't be able to fulfill every demand consumers or retailers request.

A DAILY, SOLID, CHECKABLE REGISTRATION

Recently Royal FloraHolland's Managers Sustainability & CSR visited Kenya to discuss sustainability issues. "We had excellent discussions. We were able to advise growers in the world of changing market demand and changing availability of certification and registration programs in Kenya and worldwide. It is important that they start or continue a daily, solid, checkable registration on the use of agrochemicals in the production and use of water. I am happy with the role

the Kenyan Flower Council (KFC) takes, but this element isn't yet completely in the KFC certificates, as it is in MPS certificates, for example. It is good that KFC and Kenyan authorities have created export licenses, but should KFC control these certificates themselves?"

"I know that many Kenyan growers are well under way on sustainability issues, but I know others aren't. By the year 2020, 90% of the traded flowers and plants worldwide should be produced by the Basket of Standards of the Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI). In simple terms, this means they have to be produced under label (see also page 37 of this magazine). This could mean flowers and plants produced outside the Basket of Standards would no longer be welcome at major outlet channels. FSI created the Basket of Standards to protect ethical growers from growers who don't care about the environmental, legal and social implications of sustainability. The European market asks for sustainably-produced flowers and plants and consumers ask for transparency. It is time to create and implement it."

The sustainability issue in Kenya may be primarily market-driven, but the issue gets extra attention in production and transport.



Creating sustainability by creating continuity

Sustainability is about saving the planet and caring for people. But in order to do so, companies need to turn a profit. Sustainability also means creating a profitable continuity. Naturally Harvest Ltd Kenya is supportive of sustainability being certified in Fair Trade, MPS A, MPS SQ and KFC (Silver Status). But there is more to be told.

“It’s all about having the right people, simple processes and the right product to suit your market.”

Jay Williams, Managing Director of Harvest Flower Kenya



Jay Williams, Managing Director of Harvest Flower Kenya, took over the business from his father, the late John Williams, who founded Harvest Flowers Ltd in 1995. John Williams was one of the first rose growers to set up in Kenya. Jay has been involved in the company for twelve years, six of which were spent running their UK flower import company before returning to Kenya in October 2016 after John passed away. “When I returned to Kenya it was evident that my father had established a very strong business platform but Harvest Flowers required re-structuring to be aligned with market developments. In addition, we had to streamline the business and reduce costs against rising inflation rates in Kenya. I will continue my father’s legacy but also build on it and take responsibility for the 820 employees who depend on Harvest Flowers. Our first challenge was to identify the right people, the right processes and simplify the supply chain.”

THREE FLOWER FARMS

Harvest Ltd has three flower farms located at both high and low altitudes. Harvest Flowers (23 hectares) is based in Athi River, located 20km from the International airport (JKIA) at an altitude of 1550 meters above sea level. It specialises in growing large intermediate and spray roses for the retail market. Athi River is the perfect location for producing high yielding varieties due to its high daily temperatures and many hours of sunlight. The two high altitude farms branded Aberdare Roses are made up of seventeen hectares combined. They are

located in the foothills of the iconic Aberdare mountain range 2400 meters above sea level, perfect for growing the large headed T-hybrid rose and premium spray roses. There are plans to expand an additional twenty hectares at high altitude farms in the next two years.

BACK TO THE AUCTION

“For the past ten years our roses were sold through direct sales channels,” Jay continues. “When my father ran the company this was the right business model. But the industry changed and our company needs to adapt to the market. Our marketing strategy for our Athi farm is 100% direct sales to a variety of international large scale importers located worldwide. Our two high altitude farms sell via our partner, Fresco Flowers, to Royal FloraHolland Aalsmeer. There were too many direct clients which complicated the business process. When dealing with direct sales, a company requires clients buying large weekly volumes to pay in a timely manner. Buyers in continental Europe and the wider market purchase premium roses via the auction and pay on a weekly basis. By simplifying this process we can turn our full attention to producing the highest quality roses on a consistent basis to achieve the best net price for the farm. Fresco Flowers is a leading Dutch packing company with a great network of local and international buyers. By working with Fresco we can ensure our quality and packaging is second to none. It allows us to widen our market through online sales and the auction. We see this cooperation with Fresco

Flowers and Royal FloraHolland (via the auction) as a strategic one enabling us to create a better future for our company.”

PEOPLE, PROCESS, PRODUCT

“We have re-structured our company by making key strategic decisions,” Jay concludes. “We have a clear direction for the future of the business. Aberdares Roses is the brand name for T-Hybrid and Premium spray roses auctioned daily through Fresco Flowers. Harvest Flowers sells directly to the retail market. In 2018, we’ll start a complete re-planting with intermediate varieties not only matching the retail market demand but also producing a high yield per square meter. Being a reliable supplier is extremely important to our customers, both direct- and auction-based. It’s all about having the right people, simple processes and the right product to suit your market. These three have to be aligned to create a reliable supply chain and position ourselves as the leader within the market. In addition, we created a simple but effective digital stock management system on the three farms. This gives us complete transparency and accountability with our team and also allows our clients to have real-time analysis of our stock which is integrated into our sales process. We are one of the first farms in Kenya to adapt this approach. By working on all of the above we are assured of creating a sustainable future for the business.”



Creating indoor nature

“We create indoor nature by adding natural elements to office buildings. Planters. Fixed and mobile green walls. Green landscapes. Indoor gardens. Green works of art. But also plug and play product where it only takes putting the plug into the socket to activate it. On top of that we are specialists in water walls and indoor water elements.”



More and more people are convinced of the power of green

In brief, Tonny van Hall explains what his company, art aqua, is doing. Art aqua is a German company that creates greener office buildings and Tonny is art aqua's Dutch representative, building up a European dealer organisation and a network of interior decorators.

More and more people are convinced of the power of green. People work more effectively when there are plants in their workplace. There is less absenteeism. In general, they are in a better mood which affects their work in both quality and quantity.

"Architects may be our most important group of clients," Tonny says. "Years ago plant decorations were only used when an office building was almost completed. These days we work with architects from the beginning of the design process. By doing so we integrate our vision for plants and water elements into the overall plan, which improves the end results enormously. And being part of the team means you are not indistinguishable anymore."

"Many of our products have been tested by the renowned German Fraunhofer Society. This means our products have proven benefits. It is, for instance, a proven fact that a good indoor climate in an office building diminishes the number of sick days per employee each year by 2.5 to 3. So investing in a good indoor climate makes a lot of sense and gives a quick return on investment."

"Another of our usp's is our ability to create solid water walls and water elements. Everyone is afraid of flooding but our products are solid enough to avoid it. And there is proof that you can lower the indoor temperature by creating humidity in your space. This is important since

lowering your indoor temperature by 1°C equates with lowering your energy costs by 6%."

"A green office is a healthy office. Plants improve the air quality and reduce harmful substances. Plants and water features are an even better combination in an office building for with water features you can diminish dust, electrosmog, smells and other harmful substances. Office water features create a healthier environment for plants. They won't get dusty and their stomata remain open so they continue to release oxygen."

In modern offices the air is often too dry. By using plants and water you can improve that, which, for example, prevents your employees' contact lenses from getting dry (and your employees from getting irritated)."

"Greening office buildings creates opportunities for both companies like art aqua and for interior decorators and plants growers. The plants we use are purchased from a local grower. Next to our Dutch showroom is a specialized nursery for large project plants so we do quite a lot of business with them."

"There are endless applications in greening buildings and we are full of ideas, so there are endless possibilities to use plants in and around offices. It is a product that makes sense in today's work environment. Employers try to unite good, talented (often young) employees. Creating an agreeable, healthy workspace is an excellent way for employees to bond because this makes them feel better. So here is a sustainability issue that is full of promise."



Migros, the practice of sustainability

Retailers can be a driving force in creating sustainable societies by translating consumers' sustainability needs to their suppliers. Swiss retailer Migros is an example of this. What are Migros' sustainability ambitions?

Migros is Switzerland's largest retailer with an annual turnover (2016) of US \$27.8 billion and over 100,000 employees. It was founded in 1925 by Gottlieb Duttweiler as a co-operative because Duttweiler believed that Migros should be as vital to its customers as customers are to Migros. Customers have a voice in the Migros company policy and 1% of the company's turnover is earmarked for cultural activities.

HOW DID MIGROS ESTABLISH ITS SUSTAINABILITY POLICY?

At Migros, sustainability is an integrated part of the company's policy, not a separate program. Values like responsibility and credibility are integral components of the Migros strategy and guide the management's decisions in sustainability issues. New sustainability issues are regularly introduced by the Migros co-operative. If an idea has potential it will be rolled out in the shops. Migros has a transparent sustainability policy, publishing results in its annual report and on its website.

WHAT ARE THE KEY SUSTAINABILITY VALUES AND HOW DOES MIGROS INCORPORATE THEM?

One of Migros' key values is that societal benefits are more important than their own. So sustainability is an integrated part of Migros' business interests and culture. It is part of the total value chain and has economic, social and ecological goals. In creating sustainability, promises are made on a general level, which are eventually carried out in the supermarkets. In the past, promises to offer more products for patients with allergies, 100% sustainable fish and better product leaflet information were kept. More recently Migros has promised to offer more vegetarian and vegan products, create more internships, disseminate information about environmental issues and sponsor local track events. So all aspects of sustainability are covered.

HOW ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY AND FLOWERS AND PLANTS?

Migros supermarkets sell cut flowers, house plants, garden and vegetable plants and herbs. The minimum demands in sustainability are standard Swiss GAP or Global GAP (GRASP). Another important label is

FairTrade Max Havelaar. 90% of the roses sold by Migros are sold under this label. If a rose grower wants to sell roses to Migros Fair Trade, Max Havelaar is a must, which means it is virtually impossible for European rose growers to sell their flowers to Migros.

The majority of Migros garden plants are offered under a private bio label, Migros-Bio. When possible, these plants come from local (Swiss) growers under the label "From the region. For the region." Customers are keen on buying local plants.

WHAT DOES THIS SUSTAINABILITY POLICY BRING TO MIGROS?

Switzerland is a prosperous country with consumers that are involved in sustainability issues. Sustainability has a long history in Swiss culture, in both ecological and social aspects. Therefore, a solid reputation in sustainability is of vital importance for Swiss retailers. On top of that, within the Migros co-operative customers get their voices heard.

Therefore, Migros is considered to be one of the world's most sustainable retailers. Migros is involved in ratings like these in order to further improve itself.

Switzerland is a good market for flowers and plants and Migros is one of the key players in this market. It is therefore an interesting market for plant and floral wholesalers and growers. But if you want to compete in this market, be sure to be a sustainable supplier. Because sustainability is a cornerstone of the Migros company policy.

Sustainability has a long history in Swiss culture, in both ecological and social aspects.

Being green appears to be a niche



When people see you care about more than quick profit, this creates trust which is priceless.”

Lynn Mehl
Eco Florist



In our industry, everyone is aware of retailers insisting on sustainability but there are a few green florists, too. Lynn Mehl of Good Old Days Eco Florist in New Windsor (New York, USA) is one of them. “Becoming an earth-minded, green florist turned out to be something bigger than just following my own beliefs. I could also promote my shop as a niche business.”

“Of course more florists are becoming aware of the benefits of being green,” Lynn says. “But it does take an effort to reconstruct a traditional florist to a one-of-a-green mind. For me, it started in December 1997 while compiling my Valentine’s Day order. My mother asked where those beautifully scented, American Beauty roses had gone we used to have. I had to admit they were no longer available because the Latin American roses had taken their place. I recalled the years of our complacency toward the lessened scent of flowers and seeing pesticide-covered foliage as just a common occurrence. However, in 1997 my rose research made me unhappy with what I found. Latin America’s track record on pesticides and labour circumstances was far from good. As an environmentalist I was living my life one way and having a career another. This knowledge made me extremely unhappy with the ways of my industry, so I decided to either change careers or try to change my business.”

“I started with the flowers. From California and Florida to Minnesota and even more local from the East Coast, in season I researched growers and contacted them asking if they would send me their flowers. They happily agreed to. I Americanized the entire assortment in my shop, not only flowers and plants but decorative accessories,

too. It greatly lessened the chemical use, vastly improved my carbon footprint on transport issues and supported our American farms. With my product issue solved, I then took each component of an operating florist, investigating all processes and materials from the smallest of cleaning and office supplies to recycling, and my energy and water use. Everything is recycled, reused, or upcycled. One by one I either discontinued as many non-green minded items and issues as possible or found sustainable alternatives.”

“Floristry is an industry based in nature so it should be friendly to the environment. In our growing season of late Spring to the end of October we mainly use local flowers from the East coast. In winter, our flowers are mostly from California and the southern states. Fortunately, more people now, especially millennials, are interested in environmental practices and products so the demand is there and growing for local and domestic-sourced flowers and goods.”

“Being eco-friendly means being a traditional florist. I adapted early on when it came to the internet and having a website and I laid the groundwork for sustainability. Because of my website, green-minded people across the country have ordered bouquets, even to New York City, 60 miles from my shop.

My flowers are sold to a mix of what I term dark green, light green, brown, and patriotic people. Some clients are more green-minded and others are less while some not at all, but the appeal is there and I pick my battles. When a bride-to-be enters my shop and asks for out-of-season flowers or a Colombian import variety, I show her the local, seasonal and American-grown alternatives that might be better for the environment and let her choose.”

“Year-round availability of any agricultural product has become the standard in our current society. I cannot change attitudes on my own but I can bring awareness and influence to as many as possible to be more responsible with purchasing, including florists. People visiting my shop come to see the best and brightest of flowers. This is why they choose to visit a florist instead of a supermarket. We can do things differently by offering both the most beautiful and sustainable. We must regain the florists’ exclusivity and price because if we have the same products & pricing as a supermarket, there is no benefit to visit us, much less place an order. Being a green and sustainable business and selling local products gave my business a certain image but without my realizing it. I also gained client trust and a valuable commercial niche within our industry. When people see you care about more than quick profit, this creates trust which is priceless. People trust me and have become the best kind of customers: loyal. I didn’t set out or intend to develop this clientele, it just happened as a consequence of greening my shop.”

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A basketful of transparency

Along with front-running breeders, growers, wholesalers, retailers and industry organisations as well as NGOs worldwide, Royal FloraHolland is the founder and a proud member of the Floriculture Sustainability Initiative (FSI). FSI is a precompetitive market-driven initiative creating a license to operate sustainably and a separate license to deliver sustainably. Members share concerns about worldwide trade and supply streams of flowers. The whole world considers sustainability to be relevant. We consider how products (flowers and plants, too) are produced and traded before they reach the consumer. We need to know what is behind the product, which means more than just looking back at the chain. Sustainability is a chain responsibility. So yes, as a grower you should demand sustainably-produced cuttings or bulbs (both environmentally and socially). But when you benefit from child labour, the end product is not sustainable. Selling flowers to malicious companies cannot be sustainable either. There are more questions to be asked if you look at sustainability from this perspective. Do you know the conditions in the mines where your fertilisers come from? Or how the wastewater is treated?

Efforts towards more sustainable production have resulted in numerous certificates, overwhelming everyone involved. FSI is now creating a Basket of Standards with the goal that by 2020, 90%

of all flowers and plants will be produced and traded under these certificates, guaranteeing that international laws and guidelines are being respected on environmental and social issues. This creates transparency for the entire chain, from breeders to retailers and florists.

The problem we still have to solve is that these market demands vary per continent. Yet we want a level playing field by creating international standards. At the moment European standards are the strictest, but what to do with a grower who sells most of his flowers to China and only a small percentage to Europe. He will think he has to achieve more than his customers require. These are the issues we still have to deal with. I do not believe in different Baskets of Standards per continent, but we could allow limited variations per continent, enabling us to follow continental market and consumer developments to discourage the notion that one size fits all. At the moment, Europe is the strictest, but North America is catching up. And in the end, we get closer to our final goal, being transparent about the way floral products are being grown, traded and transported all over the world.

Gijs Kok

is Royal FloraHolland's Manager of Sustainability & CSR.



IPM hosts finals of the International Grower of the Year

“This award is very different from any other award.”

Poul Graff
owner of Graff Kristensen



Normally we share several events on this page, telling you what shows, fairs and exhibitions are upcoming. This issue we're focusing exclusively on the finals of the International Grower of the Year Awards on January 23, 2018 at IPM Essen, Germany.

Nine ornamental growers from Canada, China, Colombia, Israel and the Netherlands have reached the finals of the AIPH International Grower of the Year Awards (IGOTY) 2018.

On Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at the IPM Fairground in Essen, Germany, the horticulture industry will come together to celebrate the finalists chosen the world's best in ornamental horticultural production.

One will become the AIPH International Grower of the Year 2018.

AIPH is proud to host the awards in partnership with Founding Partner, FloraCulture International; Headline Partner, Royal Flora Holland; and Event Partner, IPM Essen. Other sponsors include Bord Na Mona, Dummen Orange, Florensis, MPS, Poppelman and Rosso Group.

The finalists are:

- AYURÁ SAS – Colombia
- Holla Roses BV – Ethiopia/the Netherlands
- JUB Holland (Jac. Uittenbogaard & Zonen) – the Netherlands
- Kwekerij van Wijgerden VOF – the Netherlands
- Saidi-Ronen – Israel
- Ter Laak Orchids – the Netherlands
- Van Belle Nursery, Inc. – Canada
- Yunnan Wei Jun Kai Landscaping Engineering Co., Ltd. – China
- Yunnan YinMore Flower Industry Co., Ltd. – China

There are three main categories: cut flowers & bulbs, finished plants & trees and young plants. Bronze, silver and gold awards will be presented, where applicable, in each category. Each of the category winners will be in the running for the overall award, AIPH International Grower of the Year. There are also two new categories this year, Sustainability and an Inspiring Business Award.

“It's a very emotional ceremony,” says Carlos Manuel Uribe, Managing Director of Flores El Capiro, last year's IGOTY Winner 2017. “This prize was for our workers! At this awards

ceremony you are surrounded by the biggest and best in the world, so you should be there.”

Young Plants Winner 2017, Poul Graff, owner of Graff Kristensen, said, “This award is very different from any other award as it's given to us by fellow plantsmen, growers and their associations around the world. This is a fantastic honour for our associates so that they can see that visions and strategy are not just a paper exercise.”

“The calibre of the 2018 entries has impressed the jury panel once again,” stated Tim Edwards of Boningle Nurseries (UK), who is the chairman of the jury. “Each competitor should be proud of the fantastic work they do within the sector.”

The awards take place during the week of IPM Essen, Germany, the world's leading horticultural trade fair. The evening ceremony includes a drinks reception, gala dinner, live entertainment and provides a great opportunity for international networking.

Find out more about the finalists at www.aiph.org/groweroftheyear

Colophon

FloraCulture International

is an independent international trade magazine gifted to the floral industry by Royal FloraHolland. FCI shares knowledge within the industry by bringing together markets, people and cultures because we believe this will make us all bloom.

FCI team

Katja Bouwmeester (Editor in Chief), Piet Kralt (Editor), Rianne Nieuwenhuize (Editor), Angie Duffree (Traffic & Sales) and a number of highly talented journalists and photographers.

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