

Froster Leverages Aptean to Optimize Logistics in the Frozen Foods Market



Industry

Food & Beverage

Challenges

- » In need of new functionalities to better support business processes
- » Current solution provider no longer met expectations

Benefits

- » Integration with Warehouse Management System
- » Alignment of all processes
- » Staying up to date with automation

Whether it's croquettes, calamari, sourdough bread or pancakes, John Rombouts can store everything at Froster. Originally a trading company founded in the '80s, Froster has grown to a logistics platform for frozen products. With over 30 years of experience, John Rombouts built a successful business. Now, Froster has 150 employees and a storage capacity of almost 25,000 pallets on 15,000 square meters. Over the past few years, the product range has been extended significantly. With their own truck fleet of 35 trucks, Froster drives all over the Netherlands and Belgium to supply retailers, wholesalers and food service businesses.

"We realized that, due to our growth, we needed new functionalities to better support our processes," says Rombouts, now serving as Managing Director. "Based on that need, we did extensive research and chose Aptean Food & Beverage ERP built on Microsoft Dynamics. With regard to software requirements, we were only focused on good procurement and sales support of our trading activities. At that time, a packing slip was enough for logistics, and we would go into the warehouse with just that slip."

"For the longest time, we had an employee who did the programming for us. But as you grow, the requirements pile up, increasing the risk if you continue to manage this internally. Our former partner was no longer able to meet our expectations, so we came into contact with other automation experts in the food industry, where Aptean Food & Beverage ERP *DIN Edition* best suited our needs. First, it was only for the licenses and maintenance of the existing environment, but later we took advantage of the additional benefits," concludes Rombouts.



“Due to our growth, we realized we needed **new functionalities to better support our processes.** Based on that need, we chose Apteian Food & Beverage ERP.”

John Rombouts, Managing Director, Froster



Integration with Warehouse Management System (WMS)

“Our ambition as a logistics platform has ultimately driven us to separate our commercial activities from the logistics,” adds Rombouts. “In 2017, we re-implemented Microsoft Dynamics based on Apteian Food & Beverage ERP, focused on our logistics processes. At first, we thought this would be a big task, since we arranged this internally with our own people. Luckily, this went very well, and we only encountered a few issues after it went live, which were solved within one week. At the same time, we heavily invested in the automation of our logistics for third parties, including the purchase of a WMS system. We integrated this with Apteian Food & Beverage ERP. Stock positions and items in our WMS and ERP must be the same. With the large amount of logistics and financial transactions, the challenge is always to align these processes. Apteian is also the basis for our bookkeeping and our role as a factoring company.”


Upgrading the fleet with technology

“This year, we further optimized the transport by installing on-board computers with GPS,” explains Rombouts. “The goal is to send the planned routes to the on-board computers and give drivers the possibility to send consignment notes to HQ from their vehicle. In addition, the communication is smoother, and the driving and rest times can be determined and safeguarded beforehand. Digitalization enabled us to simplify processes that would have otherwise been done manually. We also safeguarded temperature registration, which is very important for food safety and quality.”

What changes on the market have taken place over the past 10 years?

“The capacity and volume of the fresh frozen market has grown substantially, and a clear increasing trend in product range can be observed,” says Rombouts. “Yet, little investment has been made in cool storage capacity; storage and logistics are increasingly being outsourced. For instance, supermarkets increasingly refer smaller suppliers to a logistics supplier such as Froster. These smaller companies all enter into a separate contract with Froster and choose their service package, where they can use our possibilities with regard to EDI, invoicing, packaging and transport. This way, retail has much more control over the accuracy of the process.”

“In addition, start-ups hardly even know the wholesale model anymore. They usually start from an online paradigm. Once this becomes increasingly successful, the first challenges arise. They will start looking at other distribution models, including the traditional wholesale model, in order to get the products to the end user. Our strength is our complete service package and network to help them grow successfully.”



“Thanks to Aptean, the implementation was **very smooth and satisfactory**. We now only have to take small steps to be able to work with the latest technology.”

John Rombouts, Managing Director, Froster

“We also realize that the vegetarian market is growing very fast, and the share of biological products in our storage is rising. The quality standards for obtaining and retaining certification are getting higher and higher. The checks are occurring more frequently, and the requirements are increasing. Since we are BRC, SKAL, IFC and ‘Beter Leven’ (Better Life) certified, this is not a concern for us.”

“The transition from a trading company to a logistics platform was a big step. We basically had to change our entire business model. To gain the necessary insight and control, we now use the financial features within Aptean Food & Beverage ERP much more intensively. This way, we can assign both direct and indirect costs to customers. Consequently, we are now actively managing this process,” concludes Rombouts.

Froster 2.0 - the future

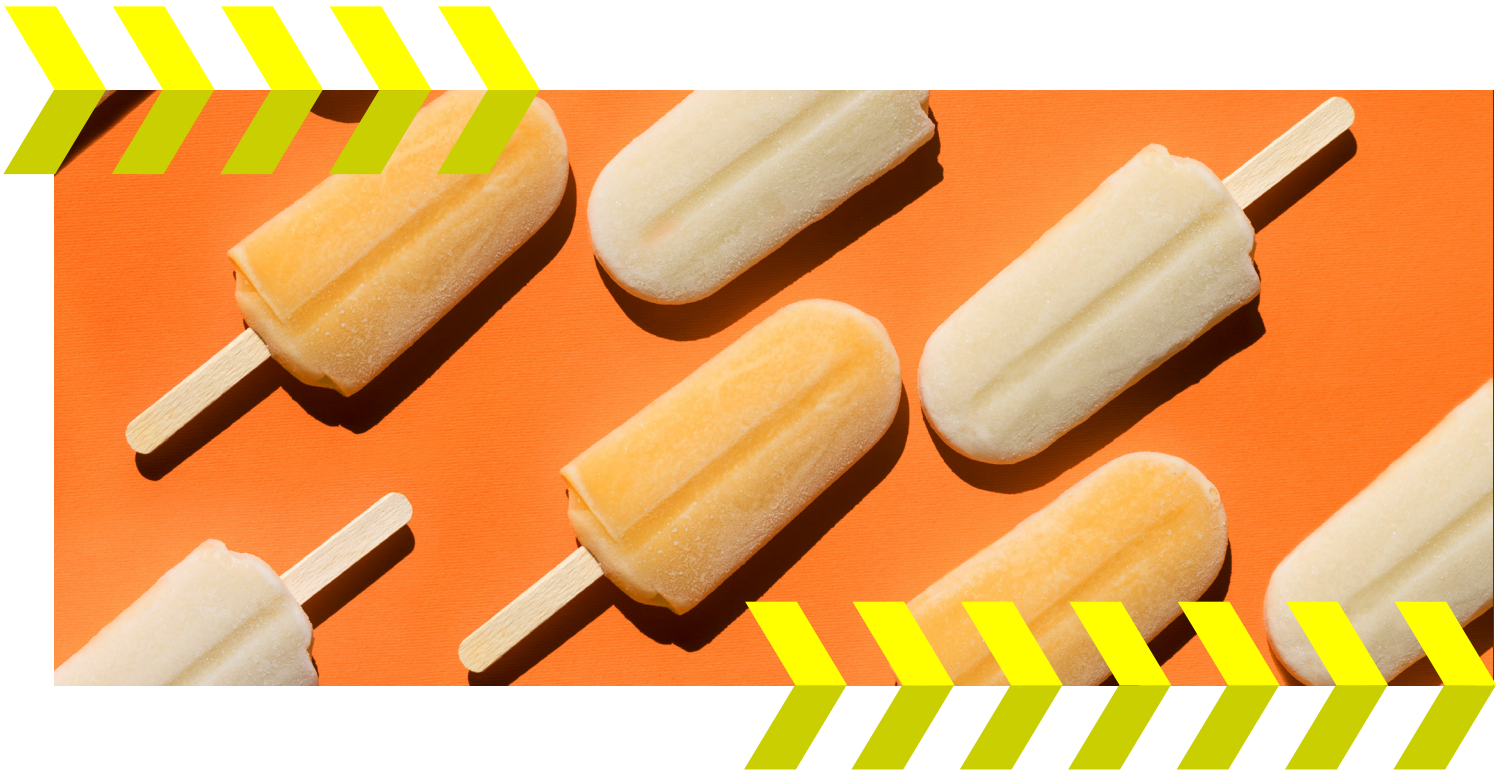
“If you look at the current market, you see a clustering of parties, both on the wholesale side and on the producers and retail side,” explains Rombouts. “These parties are getting bigger and bigger, and you have to grow accordingly. Building a cold store for 50,000 pallets seems like a lot, but at the end of the day you simply do not count anymore if you do not take this step. If we want to be a supplier of the big players, we have to grow to at least 50,000 pallets in the Netherlands alone. That is also the maximum for us, since we want to remain efficient but flexible. With forklifts, honest labor and clever minds.”

The development plan for Froster 2.0 is ready with a tripling of the current storage capacity. John explains: “Our ambition is to grow to 75,000 pallets of storage capacity, 50,000 in Waalwijk - new buildings - and 25,000 in Belgium. We want to offer a complete solution for the entire Benelux. We are on the right track with the design and support of this growth thanks to the automation: Aptean Food & Beverage ERP and WMS can handle this type of growth. We only need to expand our equipment, such as the number of scanners and Wi-Fi points to support wireless operation (for instance with voice picking). The foundation is now solid. The only thing holding us back is space. We know that the market for frozen fresh products is tormented by a lack of space. At Froster, we also have a unique position in this issue: specialization with regard to the expertise and skills in food, combined with the storage and logistics process.”

Staying up to date with automation

“With ERP, we want to remain up to date. Think of growing along with the developments of Aptean along with Microsoft Dynamics,” adds Rombouts. “Thanks to Aptean, the previous transition was very smooth and satisfactory. Thanks to the Aptean model, we now only have to take small steps to be able to work with the latest techniques.”

“Currently, invoicing is done with a lot of manual administration, and we aim to automate this process. The rules for invoicing for different services, such as order picking, ordering and removing products, transport and prefinancing from reporting are automatically imported to Aptean Food & Beverage ERP, so we can limit manual transactions as much as possible.”



Partnering with Aptean

“We are satisfied with Aptean as our solutions partner. Even if the going gets tough, we continue to always communicate,” says Rombouts. “The drive to keep communication up is important. You realize you are dependent on your software supplier, and it is sometimes hard to translate this to your business model. The great thing about the steps we have taken by heavily investing in automation is that we can now provide better service to everyone, thanks to the further improvements of our processes and quality assurance. And we have the right partners to continue to support them in the future with regard to automation.”



Are You Ready to Learn More?

Interested to see how Aptean Food & Beverage ERP can help you better manage your food company?

Contact us at info@aptean.com or visit www.aptean.com.



About Aptean

Aptean is one of the world's leading providers of industry-specific software. Our enterprise resource planning and supply chain solutions are uniquely designed to meet the needs of specialized manufacturers and distributors, while our compliance solutions serve specific markets such as finance and life sciences. With both cloud and on-premise deployment options, Aptean's products, services and unmatched expertise help businesses of all sizes, across many industries, to scale and succeed.

For more information, visit www.aptean.com.