

# INDUSTRIOUS MALDEGEM

**Roxell,**  
a world player  
in house equipment  
for poultry and pigs  
from Maldegem

## Vrij Maldegem spoke with Managing Director Gino Van Landuyt

**MALDEGEM** - Roxell is a market leader in automated feeding, drinking, nesting, heating and ventilation systems for poultry and pig companies. 200 employees work at the head office in Maldegem. The company also has branches in the United States, Malaysia and Moscow. In addition, there is an extensive network of distributors that stretches across every continent.



It's time we took a closer look. And there's no better way to do that than with an in-depth conversation with Managing Director, Gino Van Landuyt.

**Vrij Maldegem:** Everyone in Maldegem knows of the company Roxell, but not everyone knows what your core business is. Could you explain it?

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "In a nutshell, Roxell is a world player in house equipment for poultry and pigs. Poultry accounts for the majority of our revenue: layers, ducks, broilers, turkeys and broiler breeders."

**Vrij Maldegem:** What does 'house equipment' mean exactly?

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "Everything that is installed inside and outside of the poultry and pig houses. The equipment that is essential for raising the animals. Our systems ensure that animals receive the correct amount of food and water at the right times, that their house is optimally heated and ventilated and that eggs are collected in the most efficient way possible."

**Vrij Maldegem:** In other words, farmers only need to supply the building and the animals. You do the rest...

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "Yes, that's right, in collaboration with our distributors. However, we can also provide the building too. In our group, we have a sister company in Merdrignac [France], which specializes in the construction of industrial



steel structures. The company is called Serupa s.a., which I am responsible for alongside Roxell. So, we try to collaborate as much as we can. Serupa builds, Roxell supplies the equipment. It's actually essential that we are able to provide both services because in our sector there is a trend towards turnkey projects. Investors can save time and money if they can complete an entire project by working with a single partner."

**Vrij Maldegem:** Since its inception, Roxell has developed itself into a worldwide name. Roxell has also opened important sites in other parts of the world...

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "Roxell has two sites in Maldegem: the main office here in the industrial park and our plant in Adegem, where at the moment it's mainly logistics work that is happening."

"In addition, we have a production site in Anderson USA, an assembly and logistics site in the port city of Klang in Malaysia and a sales office in Moscow." "In early March we also acquired the company Holland Heater in the Netherlands, a specialist in heating appliances for poultry and greenhouses. With this acquisition, we hope to further strengthen our range of systems for house heating."

**Vrij Maldegem:** With sites all over the world, you are a manufacturer that is always close to your customer, or at the very least in the same time zone as them. Was this always embedded in Roxell's strategy or did this develop organically, with the close proximity being a positive side effect?

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "Close proximity was always one of the pillars of our strategy: we want to be local to our customers all over the world. This means that we at the head office often work with people at a distance. It's therefore crucial that our people can work independently because guiding and managing people at a distance is always going to be a challenge."

**Vrij Maldegem:** Asians, Americans and Europeans each have their own unique approaches to business development, problem solving etc. How difficult is it to fuse these differing approaches into one company mindset?

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "...[thinks hard about this]... What you say is true, but we have the advantage that we all speak 'the language of the livestock farmer', which is basically universal the world over. Livestock farming, and in particular poultry farming, is also quite standardized throughout the different continents.

For example, innovation is important no matter where you are. This goes for agriculture too. But it is a very conservative sector. As a company, you can go ahead and explain all your innovations to farmers but nevertheless their thought process is often: *I'm very satisfied with the equipment I bought from you ten years ago, so I'd like to buy the same system again.* Whether you're in the US or Europe, this conservative attitude is the same."

**Vrij Maldegem:** Global agriculture is under pressure at the moment.

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "It's true. People want food on the table, as they always have, but they'd rather not

be confronted with how it gets onto the table."

"However, the climate you describe is less universal than you might think. In the US, for example, agriculture has much more prestige than here. In Asia, the development of the sector is in full swing to meet the needs of a growing population."

"If you look at the expected growth of the global population and the level of disposable income, you can predict with almost full certainty that meat consumption will continue to increase in the coming years. Livestock farming will continue to grow for the next 10 to 15 years but will likely plateau due to changes in consumption patterns and the increase in popularity of non-animal proteins etc."

**Vrij Maldegem:** A trend towards increased production often goes hand in hand with innovation. What does Roxell have in the pipeline?

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "There are a few trends that we are trying to respond to as well as possible. The most important is animal welfare and biosecurity. Every product that we make needs to be extremely safe for farmers, animals and consumers. Legislation is also becoming increasingly stricter, meaning that every system needs to provide animals with the highest level of comfort. We have always been a proponent of this, as a manufacturer. In fact, it's part of our company DNA."

"Aside from that, we remain focused on the needs of the farmers, who gain higher returns with our systems. Roxell has always endeavored to provide this added value. By this I mean reducing feed and water waste, saving on energy costs etc."

"Lastly, we are also highly focused on digitization. More and more houses for pigs and poultry are computer-controlled environments where remote control abilities, data storage and the generation of various messages and alarms are crucial."

"These are segments that our engineers are constantly working on to ensure that we can put the best possible products on the market."

**Vrij Maldegem:** You mentioned the trend towards a reduced consumption of meat. What impact does that have on your innovations and the expansion of your company?

**Gino Van Landuyt:** "It's a phenomenon that we're well aware of, but so far we have seen little in the way of tangible effects. We do need to remain vigilant to be able to pick up on the trends early enough to take advantage of them. But when it comes to innovations in this area, we're not working on anything at the moment." ▶





“The impact of this trend shouldn’t be overestimated, in my opinion. As I said before, the consumption of animal protein will definitely continue to grow until 2030 to 2035.”

**Vrij Maldegem: Does that apply to all types of animal protein?**

**Gino Van Landuyt:** “No, I’m mostly referring to poultry and fish. Those are the winners of the future. There is quite a sharp decline in beef consumption and pork seems to be stagnating worldwide.”

**Vrij Maldegem: It’s been a year since the start of the pandemic. How has Covid affected Roxell?**

**Gino Van Landuyt:** “All in all, the effects have been limited so far. Fortunately, we have had very few infections, and that includes in the US and Malaysia. But we were very conscientious in following the measures and immediately implemented a work-from-home policy for those that were able to.”

“On an economic level, it has certainly had an impact. Malaysia, for example, was immediately put under a strict lockdown, which is still in place to this day. Traveling to and from

Malaysia is still forbidden. It has also influenced certain ongoing projects over there. However, I must say that it has really brought to light just how creative people can be. Due to Covid, we discovered that we could install and launch a brand-new machine in Malaysia with only video and phone calls at our disposal. If you’d have asked me if that was possible before the pandemic, I would have had my doubts, to say the least.”

**Vrij Maldegem: And what about revenue?**

**Gino Van Landuyt:** “Roxell in Maldegem has been able to hang in there pretty well. We had barely any loss of revenue in 2020. After the shock of the first wave in March and April, we stayed quite busy in 2020.”

“The sites in the US and Malaysia were impacted more. In these countries, a much larger proportion of customers decided to postpone their investment decisions, which did lead to a significant dip in our revenue.”

**Vrij Maldegem: Are any of the changes that you made during the pandemic here to stay?**

**Gino Van Landuyt:** “Working from home, for sure! Before the pandemic, Roxell had very few employees working from home, but Covid has taught us that we can operate very successfully with a much larger percentage of remote workers. So working from home is a keeper.”

“In addition, we’re a company that usually travels a lot, since our market is the entire globe. Due to Covid, we realized that travel is not always a must. Some things can be done just as efficiently at a distance with video calls, for example. I believe a significant challenge for our sales people will be to use this experience to develop new processes for negotiating with customers and distributors at a distance.”

**Vrij Maldegem: Covid was one issue, but what about the transition from Trump to Biden? They have differing perspectives on the global economy. I assume that this**

**change is noticeable for a company like Roxell, especially due to your site in the United States...**

**Gino Van Landuyt:** “At the moment, we’ve noticed very little change but I think the difference in the way they view agriculture will definitely become apparent. Don’t forget that the US is a huge market: number one in terms of chicken meat production, number two in egg production, number three in pork production and possibly the largest grain producer in the world, and so on.

Any change in priorities will be felt around the world. The Biden administration is much more focused on the environment and on controlled growth of agriculture. Compared to Trump’s administration, they will steer towards the European approach, with more moderate policy in regard to output and export. In general, the government will have a stronger influence on the agricultural sector.”

**Vrij Maldegem: Is that a change you’d like to see?**

**Gino Van Landuyt:** “...[laughs]...[thinks it over]... It will without a doubt lead to certain limitations in the short term, but frankly I don’t think we should be concerned about it in the long term. Primarily because this strategy will automatically generate greater opportunities for the more innovative companies to come up with suitable solutions. And innovation is embedded in Roxell’s DNA.”

**Vrij Maldegem: With an annual turnover of around 100 million euros, Roxell is one of the most important partners in the CTB, Inc. network. Does that mean that you get to sit down for a weekly chat over coffee with the world-famous investment guru Warren Buffett? Gino Van Landuyt:** “...[laughs]... No, if only! I met him once but I didn’t get much further than a ‘hi’ and ‘bye’ [laughs].”

Jimmy Vanrumste