

# Bulbs business shoots for top

## European Award



**V**WS Export-Import of Flowerbulbs B.V. is a family-owned business with over 40 years of experience of trading in top-quality lily, tulip, gladiolus, iris and other bulbs. The business has been voted as the National Public Champion of the Netherlands and is in the running for the European Public Championship in the prestigious 2013/14 European Business Awards. *AFI* magazine asked **Norman Cools**, ICT and PR Manager at VWS, about the award and the story behind the company's long-running success.

### How did the business get started?

VWS was founded by Piet Sijm in 1972. Son Gert is now running the business and has been visiting Australia for more than 25 years, so he has a great deal of international experience.

### Tell us about your products and services

VWS is one of the top 10 exporting companies of flower bulbs in Holland. Since 1972, we have stood for reliable quality and excellent customer service, both before and after sale.

We provide this service not only from our office in Broek op Langedijk (the Netherlands), but also by paying regular visits to the cultivation areas of our customers and suppliers in more than 60 countries.

Our main products are bulbs of liliium, gladiolus, iris and tulips. Eighty per cent of the bulbs are from Holland and the rest from New Zealand, Chile, Brazil and France, which means that we can deliver fresh bulbs year-round. Through collaborations with several growers, we are able to offer exclusive varieties and the latest assortment of products on the market.

All treatments to our flower bulbs are done under our own management. Also we test the flower bulbs in our greenhouse by planting samples. New varieties on the market are planted as well to check for compliance with our flower bulb quality requirements.

### What makes your job rewarding?

It is wonderful to visit our customers all over the world and see our products flowering. These moments are very rewarding to us. No matter the season, place or time, we can always guarantee the best possible quality, and that makes us very proud.

### How do you promote and market your business?

We promote our business by visiting and advising our customers and with our free app, extensive website, brochures and posters. We also use social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and our blog. At any time, we are always just one click away!

We are also always improving our automation, such as adding a robot arm at our packing line, and we are always doing the best we can to fulfill the wishes of the customers, because a satisfied customer is our ultimate goal.

### Tell us about your involvement in the European Business Awards

We were first chosen out of 17,000 companies from Europe, to be selected as the National Champion in the Export and Import category representing the Netherlands, along with 325 other companies from 31 countries.

We then were voted as National Public Champion of The Netherlands, voted by the public in Europe but also worldwide by our customers. The criteria for the award are success, innovation and ethics – the things that VWS stands for.

*"We will continue to distinguish ourselves with products of the highest quality and also with our enthusiasm and constant care for our customers."*

Now we are in the running for the European Public Champion Award 2013/14. In May 2014 at the finals in Athens, we will find out whether we are the company that has received the most votes. We are proud to say that we are the first flower bulb export company that has been nominated for and awarded as National Champion and as National Public Champion.

### What is your vision for the future of the cut flower industry?

It will be a challenge in the current economically difficult times to keep on finding new markets to sell our products. But despite the challenges, we see a future of many new possibilities.

We will continue to distinguish ourselves with products of the highest quality and also with our enthusiasm and constant care for our customers.

[www.vws-flowerbulbs.nl](http://www.vws-flowerbulbs.nl)