

General manager Mickaël le Helloco: "Novogen offers an alternative"



A new star has risen in the layer business. Novogen from France was launched as a sister brand of Hubbard broiler breeding. "Egg producers now have a wider choice," says general manager Mickaël le Helloco. "We believe in new challenges."

By Ad Bal

French company Groupe Grimaud recently announced the launch of their new layer division "Novogen". For many in the poultry business this came as a surprise, as in recent years strong consolidation had taken place, rather than the birth of new companies. "It is precisely for this situation that we are able to start Novogen," says general manager Mickaël le Helloco. "In the past years, the choice for egg producers has been limited to mainly two suppliers who currently dominate the market. Of course there is still a choice of brands, but at the end of the day, all these brands come from these two big companies. Groupe Grimaud therefore decided to step into the layer business with the

launch of Novogen. With this new brand we offer a good alternative to those egg producers who wish to have more choice."

Security of supply

"Of course we had some experience in this business already," Le Helloco continues. "When Groupe Grimaud acquired Hubbard in 2005, they also acquired a large sales and distribution network, as well as much experience in poultry breeding, both in broilers and in layers. Grimaud had been developing their layer strains with the acquisition of layer lines in the early nineties already. Now we are fully focusing on introducing the Novogen brand based on these lines. Both a brown and a white layer strain will be available." "Traditionally, Grimaud was well known in the duck business," says Le Helloco. "When they acquired Hubbard in 2005 and stepped into broiler breeding, turnover doubled, as well as the number of personnel. Very recently, Grimaud also took a stake in Newsham pig breeding in the US. This clearly visualises the diversification and growth strategy for their core business: animal genetics. The Novogen layer division fits perfectly well into that plan. We have everything available to realise that, in terms of structure and facilities. Think about

hatcheries, farms, logistics, personnel, knowledge, a distribution network and so on. Almost everything we have at Grimaud and Hubbard is available for Novogen, and this makes us very flexible."

No commercial stock

Le Helloco is also clear about what Novogen makes unique and attractive. "As a member of Groupe Grimaud we are an independent company, having distribution in our own hands. We will supply layer parent and grandparent stock only and absolutely no commercial layers by ourselves. If we would also sell commercial stock through our own subsidiaries, we would be competitive to our own customers, and we don't want that to happen." The sales directors of Hubbard will also be the sales directors for Novogen. "Also, this is a clear strategy," Le Helloco says. "Hubbard does have close contacts with many independent hatcheries around the globe that may also be able to supply Novogen layer stock," he says. "Now after the launch of Novogen, we will approach these independent hatcheries with the advantages of our bird and with the support of Groupe Grimaud. We have full confidence in that. We have tested our layers in practice and they are vigorous and productive. Of course they meet current market requirements in terms of conventional (cage) and alternative production systems, through good behaviour and the ability to thrive in free-range conditions. Additionally, they suit various climatic regions. We are confident that the Novogen bird is a modern layer. Toward the end of this year we can supply breeding stock to a limited extent. However, by around the middle of 2009, production will be in full swing. We will then prove that Novogen is a serious new player in the layer market." ■