



# Innovation and skill needs of workers in the food sector

**Sikke Meerman, Agri Products Supply Development Director,  
Foods Supply Chain Strategy and Technology Unit, Vlaardingen NL.**

21 November 2006





- Food industry
- Innovation
- Skill needs



# Food industry



Our logo



You may not know us....  
but you know our brands

Dove

Lipton

Knorr

HELLMANN'S

Iceberg

SUNSILK

AXE

POND'S

Blue Band

Flora

LUX

Rexona

Becel

Suave

Surf

OMO

BERTOLLI  
Lucca

AdeZ

all

SKIPPY  
SPREAD THE FUN!

etc....



Unilever's mission is to add creativity to life.  
We meet everyday needs for nutrition, hygiene,  
and personal care. *Skill needs!* that help  
people feel good and  
get more life.

*Innovative!*



# Our People



**“People are the heart of our business.**

Harnessing, developing and rewarding their skills, energy and commitment is our priority” - *extract from Unilever’s Corporate Purpose*

Unilever is one of the world’s most culturally diverse companies, with top leadership from 25 nations.





## *Talking about Agronomists and Nutritionists:*

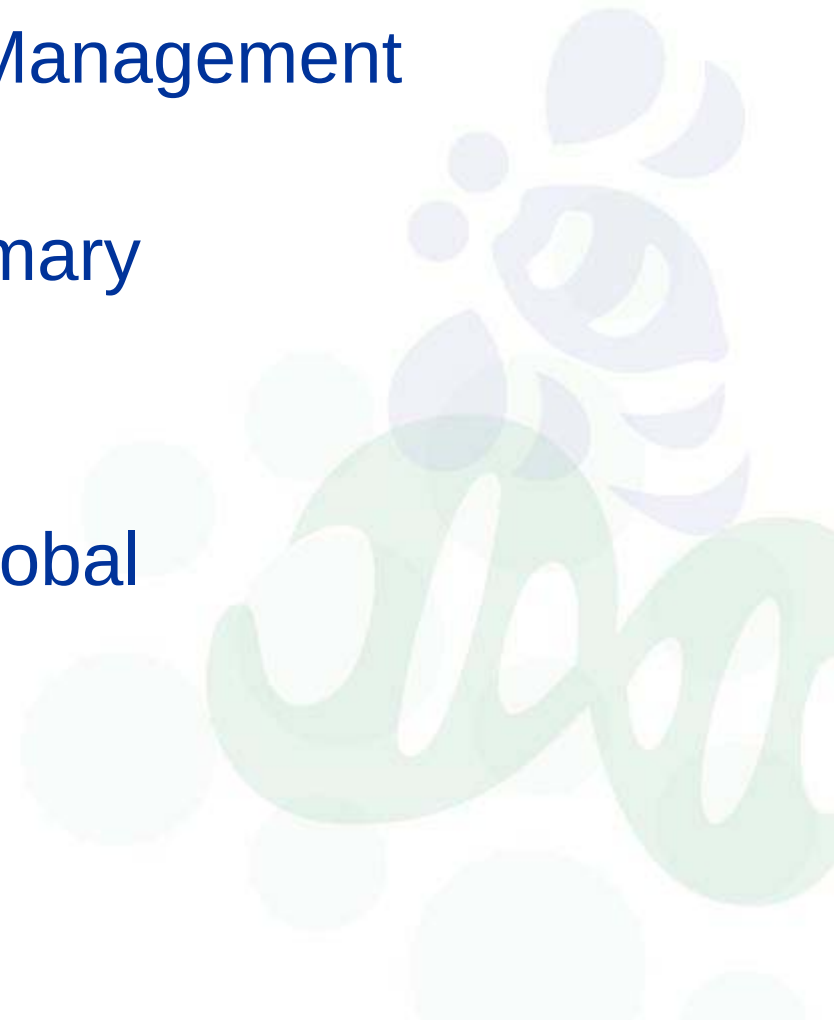
- Agricultural / Production / QA / Research / Development / SC assistant (WL 1)
- Trainees (academic)
- Assistant managers (WL 2)
- Managers and Directors (WL 3)
- VP's (WL 4) etc.



- 10% of Vlaardingen Office management staff graduated from WU incl. Director of Lab
- 30% of staff is from abroad
- English is the lead language



- Supply Chain and R&D
- Interlinked with Supply Management and Marketing/Sales
- Agro production and primary processing
- Secondary processing
- Site, Local, Regional, Global



Job examples with

educational background in agriculture

- Field agronomist
- Raw Material buyer
- Quality assistant / manager
- Specialist / agro researcher
- Upstream SC team leader
- (Primary) processing or production manager
- Operations (site) manager



# Innovation

Food and Agriculture



# The early innovation

Margarine & Soap bars:

Margarine Unie (NL) and Lever Bros. (UK) ⇒ Unilever



Why merger ? Palm oil !

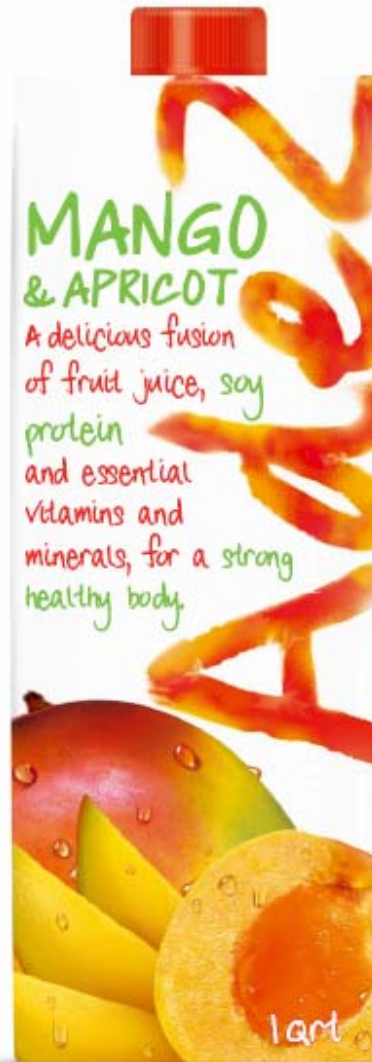
# Innovation now



## Rama Low fat-dairy free



## Lipton Clear



## Pro-Activ

*Now there are two new ways to lower cholesterol.*



In selecting new Flare pro-active milk and yogurt, like Flare pro-active spread, both contain plant sterols. A unique active ingredient that clinical trials have proved actually reduces the amount of cholesterol your body absorbs. So, like Flare pro-active spread, both dramatically lower cholesterol levels.

NEW Flare pro-active milk and yogurt. Dramatically lowers cholesterol.

## Bertolli meal





## Bursting with Fruit and Vegetable Goodness

A delicious “smoothie” style drink of **concentrated fruit and vegetable juices**



At least **half your daily recommended intake** of fruit and vegetables crammed into one mini bottle

# What's changed in the meantime?



- Prosperous and healthier society
- Technological progress
- Process complexity
- IT boom
- Retailers: dominant Supermarket chains
- Environmental consciousness, sustainability
- Food awareness (and confusion!)
- Consumer concerns
- Impact of the Media
- Legislation
- Smaller world: RM and food from everywhere
- Family life: convenience food - OOH
- Away from the traditional diet



# Some challenges for Agronomists and Nutritionists

- Back to 'nature'
- Freshness
- Bio-availability
- Clean label
- Allergies
- Nutraceuticals
- Health & wellness
- Joyful nutrition
- Nutrition in a bottle
- CSR



# Skill needs

Agriculture and Nutrition





- 1975 Graduated from Wageningen University – Plant production
- 1974 Min.of Agriculture -Teacher secondary agricultural school
- 1977 Min. of Agriculture - Manager Regional Extension service
- 1988 AVEBE – Raw Materials Director
- 1999 UNILEVER – Agri products Supply Development Director



# My 'own' trends



- Smallholders  $\Rightarrow$  larger operations
- Economic maximisation  $\Rightarrow$  sustainable production
- Fresh market (auctions-middle men)  $\Rightarrow$  direct trading / processing
- Conventional  $\Rightarrow$  organic
- Watering  $\Rightarrow$  drip irrigation
- Pesticide application  $\Rightarrow$  IPM
- Field books  $\Rightarrow$  computers
- Field 'observational' monitoring  $\Rightarrow$  sensor techniques
- Manual  $\Rightarrow$  mechanical harvesting
- Local  $\Rightarrow$  global RM sourcing

# My business involvement



- Food innovation projects: VIE, AdeZ, FS Soups
- Global sourcing development: LatAm, PRC, EU, CEE
- Agro commodities: tomato, vegs, fruit, soy
- Business support to agro teams: GR, BR, USA
- QA: food safety - chemical and physical contamination
- Performance improvement: BR, GR, USA, PRC
- Sustainable Agriculture: Tomato, some Vegs
- Knowledge management custodian: CoP
- Internal world: SC Unit team, global, regional and local business, supply management, R&D, factory management, HR
- External world: growers and grower organisations, field agronomists, breeding, agro-chemical and equipment companies, consultants, agro scientists, processors, authorities,





Unilever standards

Hard and soft indicators



Soil fertility & health

Soil loss-erosion

Nutrients - fertilisers

Pest management

Water - irrigation

Energy - renewable

Product value

Biodiversity

Social&human capital

Local economy

Animal welfare



## Community of Practice

- Nominated Unilever agro managers, agro-research managers globally
- Extended members also from supply management, marketing
- Workshops, work groups weblogs,
- Projects (LAP) and targets
- Assessment tools
- GAP docs
- Custodian of knowledge
- Reporting to global SC leadership





- Job type and WL dependent:  
Job description
- Levels: NA, basic appreciation,  
working knowledge, fully  
operational, leading edge
- Internal Supply Chain and R&D  
Academies





- Adequate educational level agro/nutri
- Some specialisms
- IT working knowledge
- Basic understanding of
  - Food (technology)
  - Quality assurance
  - Environmental behaviour
  - Waste management
  - Economics
  - (Bio) chemistry
- Languages
- Extension training: optional



## Capabilities –

some of today's requirements

- Passion for growth
- Team worker / leader
- Communicator
- Change catalyst
- Social awareness





## My concerns and expectations

- Sharp decrease of students in agricultural science areas
- Curriculum should probably become more attractive and more focussed on food production aspects
- Food sector must create a greater interest at communicating their skill and competence requirements
- More attention for development of capabilities



Thank you

