



MDM EXPERT DOES IT BY THE TONNE

For over 40-years a Dutch company has been quietly producing more separated chicken than anyone else on the planet. MPJ reports

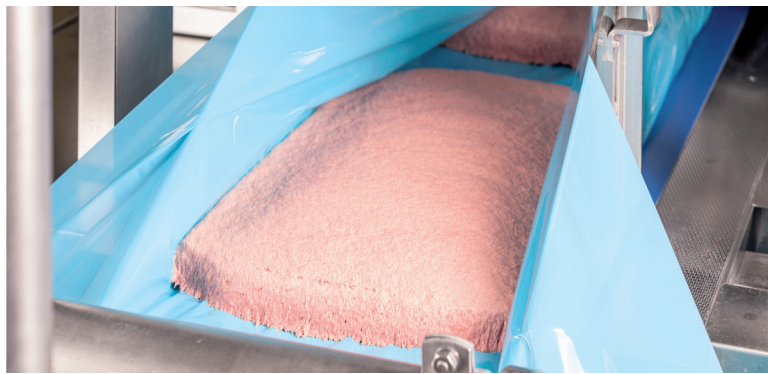
POLSKAMP MEAT INDUSTRY OF the Netherlands tends to do things in a big way. If you were visiting IPPE this year, it would have been impossible to pass the POSS separator stand and miss a custom-built separator which Polskamp ordered. This separator can turn 25 metric tons (MT) of chicken carcasses an hour into mechanically deboned meat (MDM) and is longer than a tank.

How POSS got it into the convention center's C-Hall would have been a challenge and a half, let alone how they were then going to take it apart and ship it across the Atlantic. But when you're Polskamp and the world's largest processor of mechanically deboned chicken carcasses, you don't

do anything small.

The numbers Polskamp bats about are so large that they're almost impossible to visualize. For example, the company mechanically debones 90 MT of chicken carcasses an hour, producing a staggering 65 MT of ground (mince) chicken or around 143,000 pounds. So, in other words the company produces in an hour the equivalent weight of an adult blue whale of product. With the company bringing in 5.5 million pounds (2.5m kg) of raw material a week, we're talking about a whole pod of blue whales.

Although not well known in North America, the Dutch company has been a fixture in Europe since 1976, when the company was started in Harskamp – about an hour's drive southeast of Amsterdam. Henk Van de Craats Sr. developed a machine which



separated poultry by-products obtained from poultry slaughterhouses and cutting plants. As a result of strong growth, the company opened a second production facility in Ermelo in 1983. The two sons of Henk Van de Craats Sr. now run Polskamp with Van de Craats Sr. still active within the organization.

According to Gerjan Van de Craats, the company obtains raw material (fresh – not frozen) primarily from the Netherlands, England, Ireland, Belgium, and Germany.

With the prevalence of pathogens found in chicken processing, buying someone else's carcasses which have already been through a processing plant seems like a nightmare in the making. However, Van de Craats says this isn't the case due to safeguards Polskamp has in place.

"We produce our products according to strict product specification. Through the continuous use of chemical inspections and laboratory analysis the desired fat, protein, and moisture contents are guaranteed," he says.

"At Polskamp we constantly monitor the microbiological quality of raw materials and products by determining the bacterial count and the number of Enterobacteriaceae [Gram-negative bacteria]. In addition, raw material and products are visually inspected and there is careful monitoring of temperature."

The company has 10 separators, six from POSS and four own-builds, and is currently using eight. All, he says, need constant maintenance on some parts.

All that have seen the operation are surprised at how few employees – 83 – are required to turn out so much product. While this is due to Polskamp using automation as much as possible, there is more to it than that.

According to Ken Gulak, president of POSS, what Polskamp does is a very simple thing but it does it very, very well.

"Yes, I agree with that," says Van de Craats. "We take the greatest possible care when purchasing, transporting, processing, and storing our finished product. Hygiene and quality are therefore the key in the Polskamp philosophy.

"We also can meet the requirements of our customers easily, switching seamlessly from the very large to the very small. Fat content and other product characteristics, such as protein and calcium, we can provide what our customers want."

Polskamp produces for its customers mechanically deboned chicken meat (MDM), chicken 3MM MDM white, chicken 3MM MDM red, and chicken MDM halal. These differ in fat, protein, and color. The halal MDM comes from halal slaughtered birds. In addition, a chicken skin and chicken oil product is created for sausage producing companies. All finished products are run through a metal detector.

Fresh products are available to the domestic market, otherwise all products are frozen.

Manufacturers of chicken nuggets, burgers, luncheon meats, sausages, soups, chicken stock, and bouillons use Polskamp products, along with pet food companies, and specialty oils makers. 