

## “MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES AND SMALL FOOD SMES CAN MAKE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE PLANS”

*The European Union wants to be climate neutral by 2050. In just nine years, our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions must also be reduced by at least 55%. These are ambitious plans. Fevia, the federation of the food industry, argues that the food industry must also contribute to this. I am tempted to go a step further. It has been rightly noted that with simple measures, a great deal of “low hanging fruit” could be picked by SMEs, but that lack of knowledge and time presents a major hurdle. “That’s right. But you can just as easily turn that reasoning around. Those who do put in the energy and time, not only gain financially, but also gain a competitive advantage,” says Myriam Schepers, managing director of Prefamac, which builds machines for chocolate and biscuit manufacturers.*



With a current turnover share of 95 percent for exports to four of the five continents, Prefamac has proven that sustained innovation pays off. The Lummen-based company designs its own custom-tuned machines based on extensive experience in the field. “I see similar growth opportunities for SMEs in food, but also in other sectors, when it comes

to energy consumption and ecology. Companies that fail to harvest this low-hanging fruit will soon fall behind. However, companies that reap these rewards and are committed to further savings and improvements are - to put it in cycling terms - covering a huge distance at a very fast pace,” says Myriam Schepers.

### SECTORAL ROADMAP

The European food industry is responsible for about 3% of total European CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Most of this is due to energy consumption, especially for heating and cooling. Of course, the industry has not been sitting idle. Compared to 1990, it now emits 14% less CO<sub>2</sub>. The Belgian food industry is doing even better. There, we have seen a reduction of

almost 19%, partly due to using less polluting fuels and investing in energy efficiency. The Belgian food industry has even drawn up its own roadmap to this end (<https://www.fevia.be/nl/nieuws/op-weg-naar-een-koolstofvrije-voedingsindustrie-2050> - French-language document)

### FOUR WORKABLE SOLUTIONS FOR EVERY SME

The first step, of course, is to take stock of the current situation with a so-called “baseline report”. In this, you map out how much you emit at the moment and the main sources of these emissions.

Based on that data, you can then look for available technologies and solutions to bring about reductions. The roadmap outlines 6 of them. Myriam Schepers believes that 4 are feasible for every SME:

# 1

Carry out regular energy audits and make concrete energy plans. With monitoring and so-called pinch analyses, you calculate how to minimise energy consumption.

# 2

Use renewable energy. You can do this with solar panels or (and why not?) with your own wind energy; large companies in our country and medium-sized farmers in Scandinavia are already this doing en masse.

# 3

Optimise the production of cold and heat. Examples include the reuse of residual heat or better insulation of warm rooms where the enrobing machines or piping are located. Or consider using natural refrigerants as in our Prefamac AMBI AIR cooling tunnels. Natural outdoor air is used for the first substantial cooling of biscuits or wafers. It is fully filtered so even pollen cannot get into your product. Replace the old cooling tunnels that cool your entire production area, not just the product that needs to be cooled.

# 4

Improve the energy efficiency of processes. Another example from our own premises: we add solid chocolate to a large quantity of liquid chocolate for a much faster melting process and reduced energy consumption. So, ensure your melting kettles are sufficiently large, and work with giraffe belts, which constantly add solid chocolate to the liquid mass. This will not only spread the work out efficiently, but will also make the situation much more ergonomic for your staff. And more generally: replace old machines without frequency-controlled motors. This also pays off, because every movement that is not carried out saves energy.

### STAY IN THE GAME WITH EFES

“This is for the frontrunners in the race,” Myriam adds. “Taking the easy wins first” seems to me to be the minimum requirement for any socially aware entrepreneurship. And fortunately the food sector is paying attention. With the Fevia EFES project, they are essentially guided through implementing simple measures. A regular contact person from Fevia visits your company and draws up a report on your current energy consumption. It also includes free

advice on measures to save energy and thus reduce your costs. Are you interested in any of the measures? Then your contact will be in touch and support will be available. This person will even request quotes for you, evaluate them and search for contractors or installers with you. It can be that easy, but as I said, that is not enough to really make a difference.”