A success story of pioneers

30 years of Partnership in Innovation

With the first M-System Evolution installation at Progress Group can be easily and quickly created in a wide variety of forms bent and welded, entirely according to individual specifications.

In the Dutch reinforcing steel industry, there are few companies that have been at the forefront for as long as BetonijzerBuigCentrale (BBC). Since 1953, this family-owned business has been supplying cut and bent reinforcing steel to the construction sector. Today, BBC has a team of fifty permanent employees and works with approximately twenty temporary workers, spread across its two production sites in Hardinxvelden and Giessen.

But what truly sets the BBC apart is not just what rolls off the production line, but also the software that ensures everything works together seamlessly. For more than thirty years, software provider LIC has played a crucial role in this.

AUTOMATION AND INNOVATION IN THE DNA

In the 1950s and 1960s, BBC was one of the first companies in the Netherlands to start cutting and bending reinforcing steel in advance at the factory rather than on the construction site. This was a revolutionary step during a period when the Netherlands was in the midst of post-war reconstruction. “We were actually a kind of startup of that era,” says Mees van Wijngarden, CEO of BBC. “We were on the market with the right product at exactly the right time.” This industrial mindset and forward-thinking approach have always been a hallmark of the company. In the 1970s, BBC invested Already in large production machines, and in the years that followed, it was one of the first to achieve ISO certification. “We’ve always focused on automating processes—not just with the machines, but also with the software,” says Van Wijngaarden. “That’s actually been part of our DNA our entire history, dating back to the 1970s.” This forward-thinking mindset also led BBC to turn to LIC very early on—as one of its very first customers.

SOFTWARE AS THE FOUNDATION OF GROWTH

“Our collaboration with software provider LIC began in the 1990s and has since grown into a partnership spanning more than thirty years,” explains Van Wijngaarden. “As companies, we’ve truly grown together.” What started as basic connections between software and machines has evolved into an advanced system in which production planning, machine control, and logistics are closely intertwined.

PRODUCTION PLANNING: THE CROSSROADS

Production planning is at the heart of BBC’s operations. “That’s the hub where everything comes together,” explains Van Wijngaarden. All departments—from work planning to production and logistics—refer to the same real-time schedule. This central software shows how busy production will be and how machines are being utilized. All other modules, such as invoicing, packing slips, and management reports, are linked to this. The result is complete transparency and efficient coordination from start to finish.

MACHINE CONTROL AND MORE

At the BBC, approximately 25 employees use the LIC software. Two machines—the Progress M-System mesh welding system and the Schilt production line for processing rebar from bars, complete with associated double benders—are fully controlled through the software. This integration has yielded unprecedented benefits in terms of efficiency and accuracy. The cutting optimization feature in the software also offers many advantages. The system provides accurate predictions of when a job will be completed and offers insight into production times, scrap rates, and material consumption. This means that BBC can keep its customers much better informed and plan much more effectively internally. “You gain insight into things that were previously invisible,” says Van Wijngaarden.

HIGH-LEVEL INPUT

The BBC could have chosen large, international software providers. But LIC was a better fit because they think along with us, according to Van Wijngarden. “And when we said, ‘We’d like to go in this direction,’ they listened. That’s not a given in the software industry.” And that collaborative mindset is worth its weight in gold. “LIC doesn’t respond with standard answers but offers solutions and flexibility. Plus, LIC is Dutch and therefore close to home. That makes collaboration practical and personal. And even more importantly: they speak the same language when it comes to what’s happening on the shop floor.”

RELIABILITY: THE SILENT STRENGTH

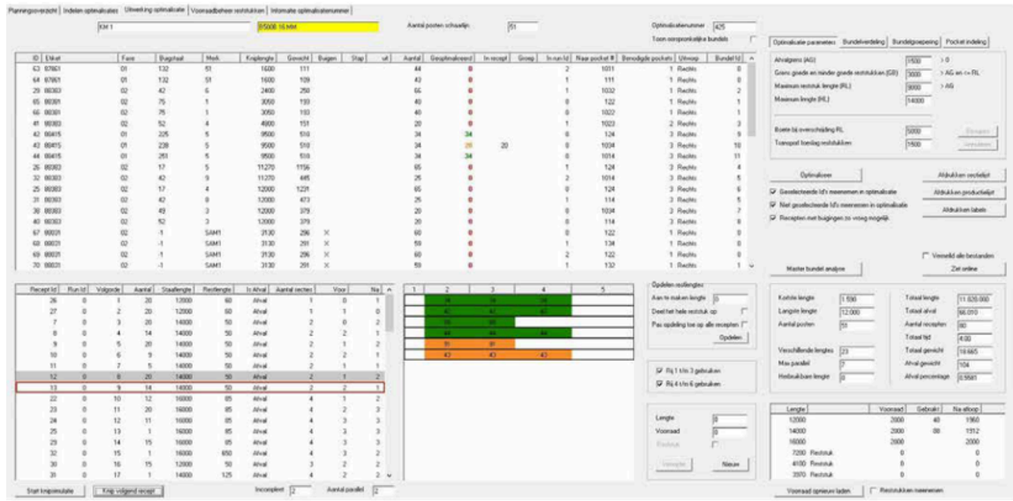
Another advantage that BBC considers almost a given is reliability. “The software just keeps running,” Van Wijngaarden states firmly. “Years of operation without any downtime and “no data loss—that’s impressive,” he acknowledges. What’s more, incident support is prompt. This means that BBC can focus on its core business—not on software issues.

GROWING TOGETHER

After more than thirty years, the relationship between BBC and LIC has grown into a close partnership. “Small steps, big steps: LIC has evolved alongside us every step of the way,” says Van Wijngaarden. “From the integration of the Progress M-System mesh welding system in 2019 to the recently integrated cutting optimization for the Schilt machine.” This pragmatic partnership is valuable because BBC invests in long-term relationships. “We’ve had some customers for fifty years. Everything we do, we do with the long term in mind—including our relationships with suppliers. And in LIC, we have a partner that shares that same commitment and, like us, is constantly striving for improvement and growth.” ■

> ‘You’ll gain insight into things that previously were invisible’

On the Schilt production line, reinforcing bars of standard lengths are counted automatically. Fast, efficient, and accurate.



The cutting optimization function provides a clear overview of, among other things, the utilization of the pockets (ejection slots) behind the cutting line. Through a simulation, the planner can see how the utilization of the cutting line capacity evolves.