



# Sofindev

“Weidelco Foodpartners, a Dutch wholesaler with a complete range of products for the food sector and its Belgian sector peer Group Claes join forces, with the support of Sofindev Private Equity Partners. Together they will create a new group called ‘Foodpartners International’ and will be a leading wholesaler of supplies for butchers and the broader food sector in the Benelux.”

23 december 2021

Sofindev, Group Claes en the Rolf family, the family owners of the Dutch group Weidelco Foodpartners from Leeuwarden, have reached an agreement about a strategic partnership between Group Claes and Weidelco Foodpartners. The Rolf and Claes families will contribute their respective stakes in Weidelco Foodpartners and Group Claes in the new group ‘Foodpartners International’, which will be majority owned by Sofindev. Both families will hold a substantial minority interest in this new group and remain responsible for day-to-day management of their respective organizations in their home markets, together with the broader management of Weidelco and Group Claes.



Weidelco is a leading player as wholesaler of butchery supplies, such as packaging, spices, cleaning products, nets, artificial casings and equipment for the food sector in the Netherlands. Weidelco brings its customers additional added value thanks to its experience in developing new concepts and formulas, next to the stockkeeping function, a complete range and logistic service. The company also provides support on topics which are important to its customers and which allows them to improve their product range, return, hygiene and promotion of their food business. The origins of the company date back to 1907, when Van Der Weide Slagerijbenodigdheden was established. In 1968 the company became wholly owned by the Rolf family when Van Der Weide was merged with Elco Koeltechniek into Weidelco. In the half century that followed, the company grew, including through various takeovers, under the leadership of the Rolf family, to become the national player it is today. The company is managed by three brothers of the Rolf family: Huub, Hans and Eddy.

The company’s brand new headquarters, which opened in 2019, and which includes a fully automated warehouse, is located in Leeuwarden, where the roots of the family Rolf lie. In addition, the company also has



# Sofindex

branches in Zwolle, Tilburg and Sittard, from where deliveries are made to customers throughout the Netherlands.



The activities and product range of Group Claes are very similar to those of Weidelco. Also the history and family background of Group Claes show many similarities. Group Claes is a leading Belgian wholesale business with a specialized and complete product range for butchers and the broader food and food processing industry in Belgium. Sofindex has been an equity partner of the Claes family and the management of Group Claes since 2018. The three sons of the founder Frans Claes, Ronny, Peter and Nico, wanted to attract a strong strategic and financial partner to find a solution for the lack of family succession and to guarantee the continuity of the company. This is what has been going on since the entry of Sofindex and gradual transition of the management. The partnership of the Rolf family with Sofindex and Group Claes stems from a similar wish of the Rolf family to ensure the continuity of Weidelco and from the strategic importance for both companies.

In recent years Group Claes has grown strongly, both organically and through the acquisition of the packaging wholesale business Brabopak in 2020. Group Claes has about 181 employees spread over the various companies of the group, Claes Distribution and Claes Machines, both located in Beringen, and Brabopak in Wommelgem.





# Sofindev

The merger of Weidelco Foodpartners with Group Claes in the new group 'Foodpartners International' creates a leading Benelux player for the supply to the food sector. Both the Dutch family Rolf and the Belgian family Claes will participate in the new group, and continue to manage their business, together with the management of both companies.

With the support and guidance of Sofindev, both companies, Weidelco and Group Claes are preparing to continue their strong growth track record of the recent years. This partnership aspires to further strengthen the market position of the newly combined group, as prominent wholesale partner of the food sector in the Benelux region, and to accelerate the international expansion outside of the Benelux, both organically and through acquisitions. The combination and cooperation of both companies will allow them to further improve their offering and service to their customers and will present more opportunities to their employees to further develop themselves, on a national and international level.

The combined group serves more than 8.000 customers with approximately 320 employees located throughout the Benelux region, from 6 locations in the Netherlands (Leeuwarden, Tilburg, Sittard and Zwolle) and Belgium (Beringen and Wommelgem).

#### **Huib Rolf of Weidelco:**

*"In recent years, we have realized a strong growth, which triggered us to look for strategic and financial support and a long term solution for the continuity of our company. The combination of Weidelco with Group Claes and the support of Sofindev has brought us this solution. Sofindev is an investment company with family investors and an entrepreneur-friendly approach, a long and positive track record in the Belgian market and a stronger activity in the Netherlands since a few years. Next to the strategic and financial expertise brought to us by Sofindev, we can only draw upon the sector knowhow, support and network of our Belgian colleagues at Group Claes. We are very enthusiastic about the synergy potential of this partnership with Group Claes. On top of that, our Belgian partners share the same values that matter to the company culture of Weidelco. With Sofindev and Claes, we are teaming up with strong partners with the same family values, who will further support us in our growth ambitions."*

#### **Ronny Claes of Group Claes:**

*"The past years of cooperation with Sofindev have proven that we, as family business owners, made the right choice four years ago when we decided to partner with Sofindev. Sofindev allows us to continue running our business and supports us in areas where we lack the knowhow. It is through their expertise and experience in mergers and acquisitions and international development that we could realize a first external expansion in 2020 when we acquired Brabopak, and this merger with Weidelco is now added. We have known the Rolf family for many years as a valued colleague who is realizing a similar growth story in the Netherlands. It gives us a lot of pleasure that they have chosen to join forces with us and to become a true Benelux leader. Together we will be able to respond even better to current challenges and opportunities in the food sector. With Foodpartners International we want to take further steps in our growth story, each in our own markets and also internationally."*

#### **Jan Camerlynck and Sven Vandewiele of Sofindev:**

*"We are very proud to be part of this new leading Benelux group Foodpartners International, which will comprise the beautiful companies Weidelco and Group Claes. Both Weidelco and Group Claes are leading*



# Sofindev

*players in their respective geographical markets of supply to the butchery, food retail and food processing sectors. The combination of both companies creates a unique player with a scale and reach without comparison in the Benelux region. This investment also matches perfectly with our mission to support the growth of leading companies through genuine partnerships with entrepreneurs and their family business and to jointly create meaningful value for all stakeholders."*

Through this investment in Foodpartners International, Sofindev confirms its confidence in this sector, in Weidelco Foodpartners and in Group Claes in particular, which has been a Sofindev portfolio company since 2018. This is the sixth investment of the Sofindev V fund which was established at the end of 2019, after earlier investments in IT services company Christiaens in June 2020, the specialist in decorative panels and timber trade Vanrobaeys in September 2020, media software company MediaGeniX in November 2020, specialist in fire safety and sprinklers Altebra in December 2020 and digital marketing company Loyals in October 2021. The investments in the Dutch company Loyals (located in Mijdrecht), in Altebra with an important affiliate in the Netherlands (located in Deventer) and in Weidelco demonstrate that the Dutch market is also a core market for Sofindev, next to its historical home market Belgium. It also support Sofindev's position as an established Benelux private equity player.

## About Sofindev

Sofindev is a leading independent private equity firm, specialized in buyout and growth capital for small and mid-sized companies in the Benelux region. Sofindev celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021. In the past decade, Sofindev has evolved into a fully independent investment team supported by a large number of respected family offices and (international) institutional investors. Amongst them are also the entrepreneurs and owners of family businesses which Sofindev invested in in the past.

The Sofindev funds have made equity investments of more than 300 MEUR in more than 50 small and medium sized companies. Currently, the Sofindev Management team manages the Sofindev IV fund (°2015) with committed capital of 107 MEUR and the Sofindev V fund (°December 2019), with total commitments of 170 MEUR. Just like Sofindev IV, Sofindev V realizes equity investments in successful Benelux-based SMEs, in partnership with the entrepreneurs and management teams of these companies, to support their further growth.

About Sofindev: [www.sofindev.com](http://www.sofindev.com)

About Weidelco: [www.weidelco.nl](http://www.weidelco.nl)

About Group Claes: [www.groupclaes.be](http://www.groupclaes.be)