About Nutreco

Headquartered in the Netherlands, Nutreco is an international leader in animal nutrition and aquafeed. The company’s advanced solutions support livestock farming and aquaculture that are at the origin of food for millions of consumers worldwide. Its two global company brands, Skretting and Trouw Nutrition, sell products in more than 200 countries. Nutreco is a wholly owned subsidiary of SHV Holdings N.V., a family-owned multinational with annual net sales of $22.9 billion (€ 18.6 billion). Experience gained over more than a century has given Nutreco a rich heritage of knowledge and expertise that paves the way for continuing success.

Business challenge

Nutreco has become a worldwide force in its industry by growing organically and through acquisition. Integrating new locations into its global network has been difficult in some cases. The nature of the animal feed industry means that many of Nutreco’s locations are in rural areas where connectivity can be a problem. Nutreco needed a network that could more easily serve its existing locations and support future growth.
Solution

Nutreco chose an integrated global network solution that includes AT&T FlexWareSM, a virtualized infrastructure service, along with AT&T Virtual Private Network and Internet access. The services run across the AT&T MPLS infrastructure, which provides a reliable, highly secure global network environment to support Nutreco’s international business.

Sharing knowledge with colleagues across the globe

Nutreco translates world-class research into practical solutions for livestock farming and aquaculture. Guided by the principles of quality, innovation, and sustainability, Nutreco has grown from a small family operation into a megacorporation with operations in more than 90 countries across five continents.

Thijn Moons, Nutreco Domain Manager of Network Services, Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing, attributes the corporation’s steady growth to producing good feed, investing heavily in research and development, and listening to customers. “We understand their needs and we try to tailor our products to meet them,” he said. “Apparently they appreciate that.”

Managing the networks of a massive corporation is challenging enough, but Moons’ position also requires him to facilitate employee collaboration. “I’m responsible for the way we work together within Nutreco and how we share knowledge,” he said.

Like most corporations, Nutreco recognizes security as vital to its network operations and takes every possible precaution to safeguard its data. Unlike many other corporations, however, Nutreco faces significant challenges because of the vast size of the corporation and the remoteness of many of its locations. “By the nature of our business, we are typically located in places that are not always easy to connect,” he said. Moons noted that it’s difficult to get services and even equipment into some of countries in which Nutreco does business. “For example, when we built a factory in Zambia, Africa, the only thing I had when we started the project was the GPS coordinates, and we had to bring in at least an Internet connection to that location.”

Adding to the geographic difficulties of global growth and collaboration are the personnel challenges facing many workplaces. “We have one population that is still very traditional, working 40 years with the company and then retiring, along with the new millennial knowledge workers that come straight out of the university and have grown up with computers,” he said. Moons knows how to bring knowledge to people. He also understands the value of technology, and so began looking for ways to enhance Nutreco’s infrastructure to help employees move the company forward.
Installing network functions with two clicks

Nutreco was already a customer using AT&T Virtual Private Network (VPN) service, so company officials asked their account team for help in expanding their network. “We have a very open and honest relationship and have almost constant discussions on how we can improve things and what techniques we can use to optimize our network service,” Moons said.

AT&T recommended augmenting the company’s VPN with AT&T FlexWare, a platform that simplifies the delivery and deployment of software-based network functions for Nutreco’s 200 locations across Asia, North America, Europe, and Latin America. FlexWare virtualizes functions that traditionally have been performed by purpose-built equipment like firewalls and routers. “We saw the potential of having those types of services embedded in our network, and so it was logical to go that route,” Moons said. AT&T also provides Nutreco with a network monitoring solution that includes application monitoring.

This elegant solution will benefit all Nutreco employees, from technology novices to veterans. With global AT&T VPN and Internet access, they can connect and collaborate in a highly secure way, whether they work from Nutreco’s Dutch headquarters in Amersfoort or from a rural factory halfway around the world.

Moons expects the network to minimize the amount of hardware the company has to ship to local sites. “And instead of buying hardware, we now can just install a function with two clicks of a button,” he said. “That gives us the flexibility that we need.” This will help Nutreco adapt and upgrade functions as the company grows and its needs evolve — all with a lower total cost of ownership.

**Flexibility and cost efficiency**

Nutreco expects to benefit from the network’s adaptability, Moons said. “It allows us to be very flexible. Whether we want to run a firewall on it or a router or another network function, it’s in our hands to decide.”

Adding functions is simple, he said. “We don’t have to go through a lengthy ordering process and add

“He have to make sure that our users from Tasmania to Norway and everywhere in between have the tools to share knowledge and work together on all kinds of projects.”

*Thijn Moons*

Domain Manager of Network Services, Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing, Nutreco
all kinds of hardware components into the chain because I want to add a firewall or router or anything else. Now it’s all embedded into one virtual product,” he said. “We have control over it via an easy-to-use portal, so we can easily scale it up and down. And that’s very important for us, because our business is quite dynamic.”

FlexWare’s innovative edge computing services place universal premises-based devices capable of running multiple functions locally, which brings data processing closer to the end user than in the traditional cloud architecture. Decreasing the distance between the data and the end user cuts latency and improves speed; it also reduces data delivery loads like backhaul, which can reduce Nutreco’s network costs. This is important, Moons said, because the company’s biggest IT challenge is cost control. “We always need to look for ways to implement good IT at the best price possible,” he said.

**Reliable support for mission-critical operations**

A stable and reliable global network is very important for Nutreco, especially because the corporation is centralizing and standardizing its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) environment to run from one central data center. “Whether you are in Australia, Norway, or Indonesia, you always use the same instance of our ERP platform,” Moons said.

ERP is mission-critical for Nutreco operations because it not only handles its financials, planning, development, and other traditional functions, but also manages the formulations and tells each factory what it needs to produce in the next run. “This 24 by 7 communication from our ERP is vital to us. We cannot do without it,” Moons said. “This is what led to our initial decision back in 2010 when the company first contracted with AT&T that we needed a Class A network provider to supply that connectivity to us.”

Quantifying the value of an enterprise network can be difficult, but Moons offered a telling example. “If one of our fish feed production facilities in Norway goes down, the loss in revenue can easily go to €2 million a day,” which is about $2.5 million dollars. “It’s quite substantial,” he said. “All our locations have emergency plans ready to use when disaster strikes, but we try to prevent that. If things do go wrong, it’s always handled in the proper way because of the relationship we have with AT&T. And that’s very valuable to me because it saves me a lot of time and hassle, and it shows that we chose the right solution provider.”

**A reliable global partnership**

Moons said Nutreco chose its new software defined network without looking at solutions from any other vendor. “Quite honestly, we never considered leaving AT&T, because we’re very happy with the way AT&T is delivering the business to us and the way they work with us,” he said. “That resulted in a very early contract renewal with optimized pricing and adding new services into the contract.”

Nutreco’s operating model calls for limiting its suppliers. “We actually have very few global providers, because we like to develop strong partnerships with them,” Moons said. That way, questions posed to an account director or service manager are answered quickly without the need for follow up. “Because our IT team is relatively small, that’s very important to us,” he added.
An AT&T operational team looks after Nutreco’s interests, answering any questions and providing monthly reports. Nutreco’s CIO and other top officials meet quarterly with AT&T executives to discuss any challenges, plan for the future and ensure that business objectives are aligned, Moons said, a process that works well for the company. “In fact, the account model that we have established over the last couple of years with AT&T is actually seen within Nutreco as a role model of how we should work and interact with all our partners,” he said. “AT&T is a global, well-performing, reliable solutions provider for Nutreco.”

As the pace of business continues to accelerate, AT&T edge-to-edge technologies will provide a platform for Nutreco’s future growth and innovation.

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