

Small but perfectly formed

Noord Natie Terminals may not be the biggest tank terminal company, but it proves that flexibility and quality of service are much more important than size

NOORD NATIE Terminals was created in 2002. The tank terminal split off from its parent company, Noord Natie NV, when it merged with Hesse Natie to form Hesse-Noord Natie and became part of Singapore-based port operator PSA. At that time, the chemicals and bulk liquids handling terminal accounted for around 5% of the business of its parent, which had become a container handling specialist. The business was spun off and is now independent and privately owned by the shareholders of the former parent.

Noord Natie's throughput by capacity is around 70% chemicals and oleochemicals. Animal and vegetable oils and fats account for around 20% of the business, and mineral oils make up 10%. It also handles a range of base oils and glycols.

The animal and vegetable oils and fats business is certified by the Netherlands Oils, Fats and Oilseeds Trade Association (Nofota) and further GMP certifications are currently being acquired for animal fats and feeds.

'We are identifying niche markets in which we can grow our business,' says Noord Natie managing director Martine Teeuwens. 'We are adapting our storage facilities and services to a wider range of needs. We also provide blending, in-tank blending and drum filling services.'

HAZARDOUS GOODS HANDLING

A good example of this strategy is Noord Natie Terminals' 50:50 joint venture with DPS in the A4S (Antwerp for Storage) hazardous goods handling facility which shares the site of its main terminal in the port. The facility offers state-of-the-art stainless steel storage in tanks which are individually automated with dedicated pipes and pumps.

The 13 tanks at the site have a total capacity of 9000m³ and are all connected to the drumming and IBC filling facility inside the adjacent warehouse which can handle chemicals from tanks or direct from tanker, truck or railcar. A4S has a depot for container storage with heating and cooling facilities and the ability to transfer between trucks, tank-



The site has facilities for ships, trucks and trains

ers and railcars.

All of A4S' tanks have dedicated vapour return systems, built to the highest specification, and the facility has a berth for sea going vessels and barges, three loading areas for trucks and one for rail tank cars.

The facility is completely automated, lending itself to handling dangerous chemicals, specialty chemicals and those with high throughputs which can be managed more easily by the automated system.

Noord Natie's terminal facilities are expansive. Over 190 tanks provide a total capacity of 225 000m³, and have individual capacities ranging from 22m³ to 8300m³. Tanks can be heated by steam or hot water from the company's own boiler onsite.

Additionally, there is wastewater treatment to deal with rainfall collected in containment areas and tank cleaning water, and a laboratory which tests effluent quality and products blended and toll manufactured on the site.

There are numerous truck loading points around the terminal, all close to the tanks, with four weighbridges for trucks and railway wagons. For train deliveries, there is a shunting station connected to the terminal and Noord Natie can provide either separate rail cars or dedicated trains in and out of the terminal. There are three berths for seagoing vessels with drafts of 11.5m, and a separate dock for barges. Cargoes can be transhipped between vessels and barges.

There is also room for growth at the Noord Natie terminal. Teeuwens estimates that an additional 100 000m³ could

be accommodated to handle all types of product. 'We already have an environmental safety permit,' she says, 'and we have the people and organisation in place to be able to handle expansion. Our strategy is to grow with the customer or to find customers who need tailor-made solutions for their needs.'

Teeuwens says that the terminal handles a combination of product flows, with some manufactured at the Port of Antwerp chemical cluster but others from France, Germany and the Netherlands using the storage facilities at the site. Products are imported, exported or despatched for further processing.

Imports from Eastern Europe and the Baltic states have grown recently. The smaller size of vessel used typically in the area suits the size of the berths at the Noord Natie terminal.

POTENTIAL EXPANSION

In terms of any potential expansion at the site, Teeuwens says: 'We are talking at this moment with a number of people before making a firm decision. We're investigating which kind of products we would wish to expand in and which our customers would like us to handle.'

'Co-siting is another option,' she explains. 'Noord Natie Terminals could provide personnel and services such as water treatment and laboratory facilities for a joint investment on the site.'

The terminal employs 70 people and provides most of its own services – such as engineering and maintenance – with limited outsourcing.

'We are not the biggest, but we try to be very good at what we do,' says Teeuwens. 'We handle a smaller number of products but we are specialists in handling all of them. For example, I believe that the terminal is the only one with the Nofota and associated accreditation in the Port of Antwerp.'

'Our customers are happy. They are assigned a contact at the terminal who will provide a very flexible approach and work in close cooperation with them.'