



Case study

# Up to 90 % less dust thanks to air purification



**Client**

Ahold



**Location**

Several locations  
(NL)



**Sector**

Distribution



**Dust reduction**

90 %



## At a glance

“With the air purifiers from Zehnder Clean Air Solutions, we were able to reduce our cleaning, energy and maintenance costs and – even more importantly – improve the working environment for our employees.”

Ronald McMurray, Facility Manager

### Challenges

The Ahold distribution centres supply supermarkets throughout the Netherlands with groceries.

As with all areas of the food industry, air purification is a high priority, as part of ensuring exemplary hygiene standards. A big challenge for Ahold distribution centres, however, was the busy forklift traffic and warehouses, which created a lot of dust. This would get into equipment and a significant amount of cleaning was needed to keep on top of things. Most important of all, however, was the effect of the dust on employees, who complained of poor-quality air and breathing problems. For Ahold, this was unacceptable.

### Benefits

Dust at Ahold's distribution centres was reduced by 90 % after the installation of air purifiers from Zehnder Clean Air Solutions. Employees reported a healthier, more pleasant working environment, and cleaning and maintenance – for example of the forklift vehicles – has been drastically reduced. Ahold could also cut its energy costs with the new air purifiers. This is because warm air that would previously rise to the top of a building is now blown downwards by the air cleaning systems, warming areas below.

### About Ahold

Ahold is a global retailer of high-quality consumer goods with a turnover of more than 30 billion euros. The company has Dutch roots and is the largest retailer in the Netherlands, but also operates in the United States and across Europe. Ahold's flagship business, Albert Heijn, is the leading supermarket chain in the Netherlands with more than 800 stores. Gall & Gall is a major player in the wine and spirits sector with more than 500 shops. Etos, a chain of more than 500 stores, is a leader in healthcare, personal care and beauty products. Dutch consumers

will also be familiar with Ahold's delivery service, Albert.nl.



For years, Ahold looked for a system that would improve working conditions for employees in their distribution centres and reduce the costs of maintaining equipment. Now they've found the solution with air cleaning systems from Zehnder. “We used to organise a deep clean of our distribution centres two or three times a year so that we could keep the dust down to a reasonable level,” explains Roy Heijs, European Sourcing Manager at Ahold. “This was not only to bring down the amount of dust settling on products, but also reduce levels in the air. Staff were regularly complaining of dusty air and difficulty breathing. At Ahold, we wanted to sort this out in one fell swoop, if at all possible.”

Many hundreds of people work in Ahold distribution centres. Thanks to their hard work, all the items they ship arrive on time at supermarkets throughout the Netherlands. “That is why our people are a priority to us,” says Ronald McMurray. “Ahold believes that they deserve the best.” McMurray is the Facility Manager at the distribution centre in Geldermalsen, the first Ahold location in the Netherlands to install a Zehnder air cleaning system. In the beginning there was some scepticism, despite the positive stories from Sweden. So it was agreed that the new air cleaners

### Quickly convinced

As it turns out, this was indeed possible. Colleagues at sister company ICA in Sweden drew Heijs's attention to new Zehnder air cleaners they had fitted at their distribution centre. These included state-of-the-art air filter systems. “We went to investigate and we were quickly convinced of their value,” says Heijs. **Since Ahold's installation of Zehnder's air cleaners, the company has noted there is much less dust in its warehouses and they have created an improved, healthier working environment.** “Another benefit was the reduction in the costs of maintaining machines and other equipment, which is significant,” says Heijs.



would be tested first for a trial period in one part of Geldermalsen. “This was so successful in such a short time, that we were quickly convinced,” says Heijs. “So we rolled out Zehnder Clean Air Solutions across the entire distribution centre.”

## Positive reactions

Roy Heijs explains how the data proved that Zehnder’s system works. “We took measurements before we installed the air purifiers,” he says. “The dust levels were above 400 microns per cubic metre. After installation the level went down to just 50 microns per cubic metre. A considerable improvement.” Says Michael Keizer, who also works in the Geldermalsen distribution centre:

**“Colleagues often said they were bothered by the dust; they complained of various things, such as a dry throat. Now the air quality is so much better we hear far fewer complaints.** There also used to always be a thick layer of dust on the pallets,” says Keizer. “That’s gone now, too.”

McMurray adds: “The measurements show that the air quality inside the distribution centre is now similar to that outside.”

## Lower energy costs

Another positive result of Zehnder’s system is that energy costs have gone down. This is because warm air that would previously rise to the top of the building is now blown downwards by the air cleaners, so less energy is needed to heat the space where people work.

**“Lower energy consumption and lower energy costs. That’s a win-win for Ahold,”** says McMurray.

“Zehnder Clean Air Solutions have perfectly met our requirements, so we’ve decided to install them at all of the Albert Heijn distribution centres. And we won’t stop there. We plan to fit them at the Etos and Gall & Gall distribution centres too.”

Zehnder’s air cleaners are also good news for the machinery. “We have an enormous number of forklift trucks, all of which contain electrical components,” says McMurray. “Previously we had to blast these components with air to get rid of the dust. Now it’s easy to see that there is much less dust in there, which greatly reduces the risk of malfunctions.” Heijs is also very positive. He’s already recommended Zehnder’s air cleaners to colleagues facing dust problems in other warehouses. “Anyone that needs convincing should come here and see things for themselves,” he says. “Then they can really experience how the systems work and what they can deliver.”

McMurray needs no such convincing. **“With Clean Air Solutions, we are seeing the savings in cleaning costs, energy costs and maintenance costs. But much more importantly, we have considerably improved the working environment for employees.”**