

BEST nv strengthens market share in visual inspection technology

Leuven, August 1st, 2003. BESTnv acquires the business unit “Machine Vision”, part of the division BarcoVision of Barco. This business unit encloses all activities of sorting machines and visual inspection technologies within the Barco group of companies. With this acquisition, BEST will increase its market share in the field of hi-tech sorting machinery and thus can be considered as world market leader in the field of laser sorting technology.

BESTnv is founded in 1996 by 4 engineers (Paul Berghmans, Eddy De Reys, Marc Ruymen and Bert Van der Auwera). From the first day on BEST has known a continuous growth and has realised a total turnover of 14.5 million euro in 2002. With the acquisition of Machine Vision BEST will reach a total turnover of 31.5 Million euro. BEST is specialised in the development of Hi-Tec, laser technology based, sorting machinery for the removal of discoloured products and foreign material from a stream of food products. This new expansion extends the product range of BEST with camera technology, infra-red detection and X-ray with which, besides the food business, new markets can be entered like recycling of plastics and the inspection of raw cotton. Barco Machine Vision adds new important selling areas like Asia, Africa and Oceania to BEST's existing markets in the United States, Europe and South America.

After the Acquisition there will be a continuing cooperation between Barco and BEST. BEST will take over the production of the “cotton sorter” and Barco will take care of the sales and marketing side of this product. BARCO will continue supplying BEST with a number of components, like printed circuit boards for the manufacturing of the machinery. BEST focuses on the further research and development in the field of visual inspection technology and finds in Barco a perfect partner to achieve this objective.

BEST has branches in Leuven (Belgium) and Denver (Colorado, USA) where a total of 45 people are employed. The Machine Vision Business Unit of Barco has branches in Aarschot (Belgium) and Eindhoven (Netherlands) with a work force of about 80 people. After the merger about 125 people will be employed by the BEST group.

Partly thanks to the KBC-bank and KBC Investco as financial partners these hi-tech companies remain in Flemish hands.

Further information about BEST can be found on our Web Site www.bestnv.com, through E-mail at info@bestnv.com or by telephone at +32 (16) 396396