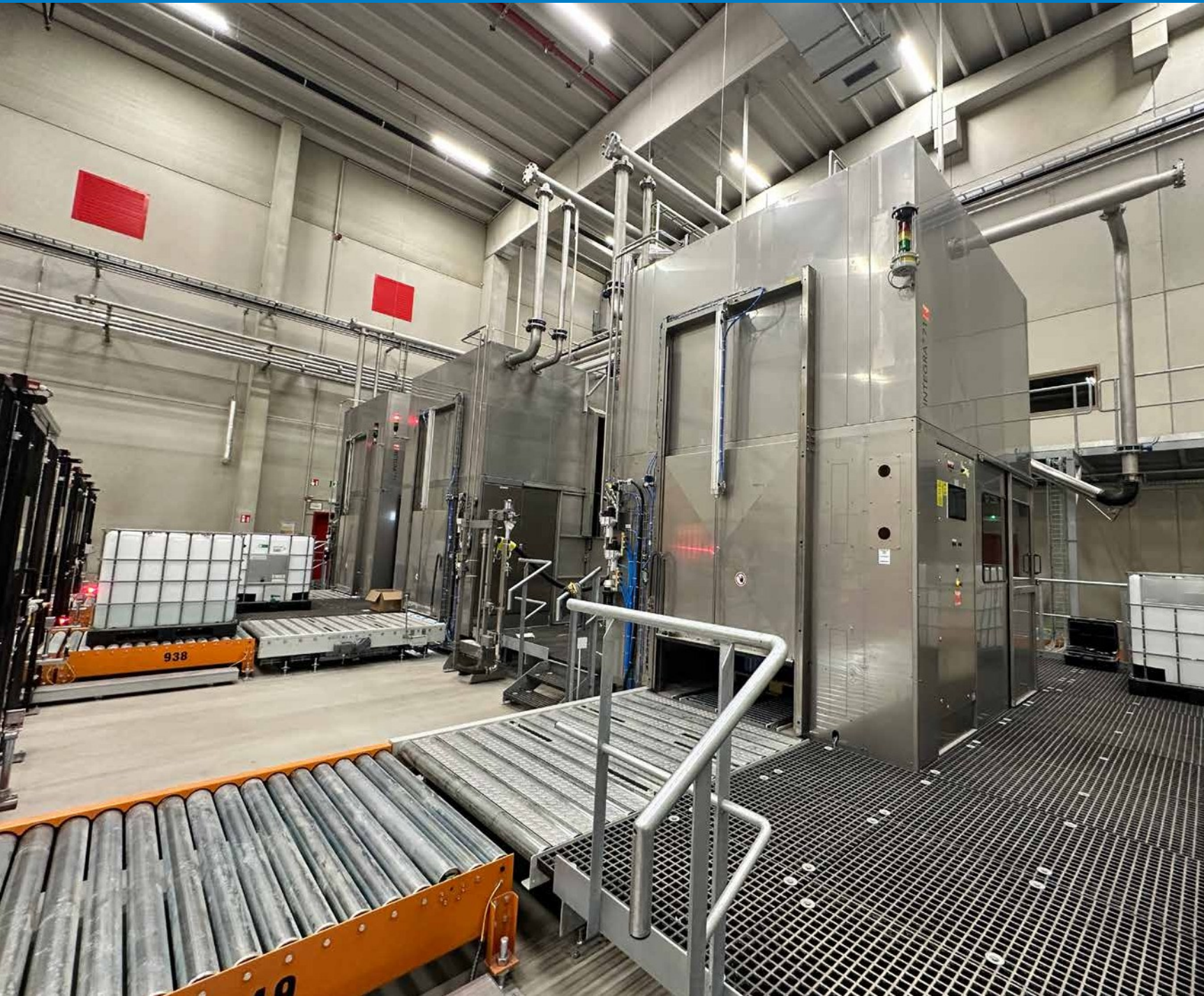


FILLING | Text: Martijn Kroese | Photography: Vermeulen



Three Feige fully automatic pallet filling machines for drums and IBCs at Alochem.

ALOCHEM'S CHEMICAL LOGISTICS HUB: 'THE MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE'

A state-of-the-art logistics hub for chemical products has been in operation in Meerhout, Belgium, since early 2025. Alochem, part of Altea, opened its Chemical Logistics Hub there in February. 'This makes us a service provider for the entire process from A to Z, right up to end customers in the hinterland.'

Chemical manufacturers want a single partner for their entire logistics process. Storage, mixing, blending, repackaging, transport – ideally, these are not separate assignments for different parties, but a joint project with one reliable partner.

With this in mind, Alochem, the division of Altea Logistics Group specialising in the chemical sector, built the new Chemical Logistics Hub in Meerhout, three quarters of an hour east of Antwerp. With three state-of-the-art filling lines, Alochem now has one of the most advanced chemical logistics hubs in the wider area. These filling lines consist of Feige filling machines, with MSK equipment for the other processes.

ONE POINT OF CONTACT AND ONE SYSTEM

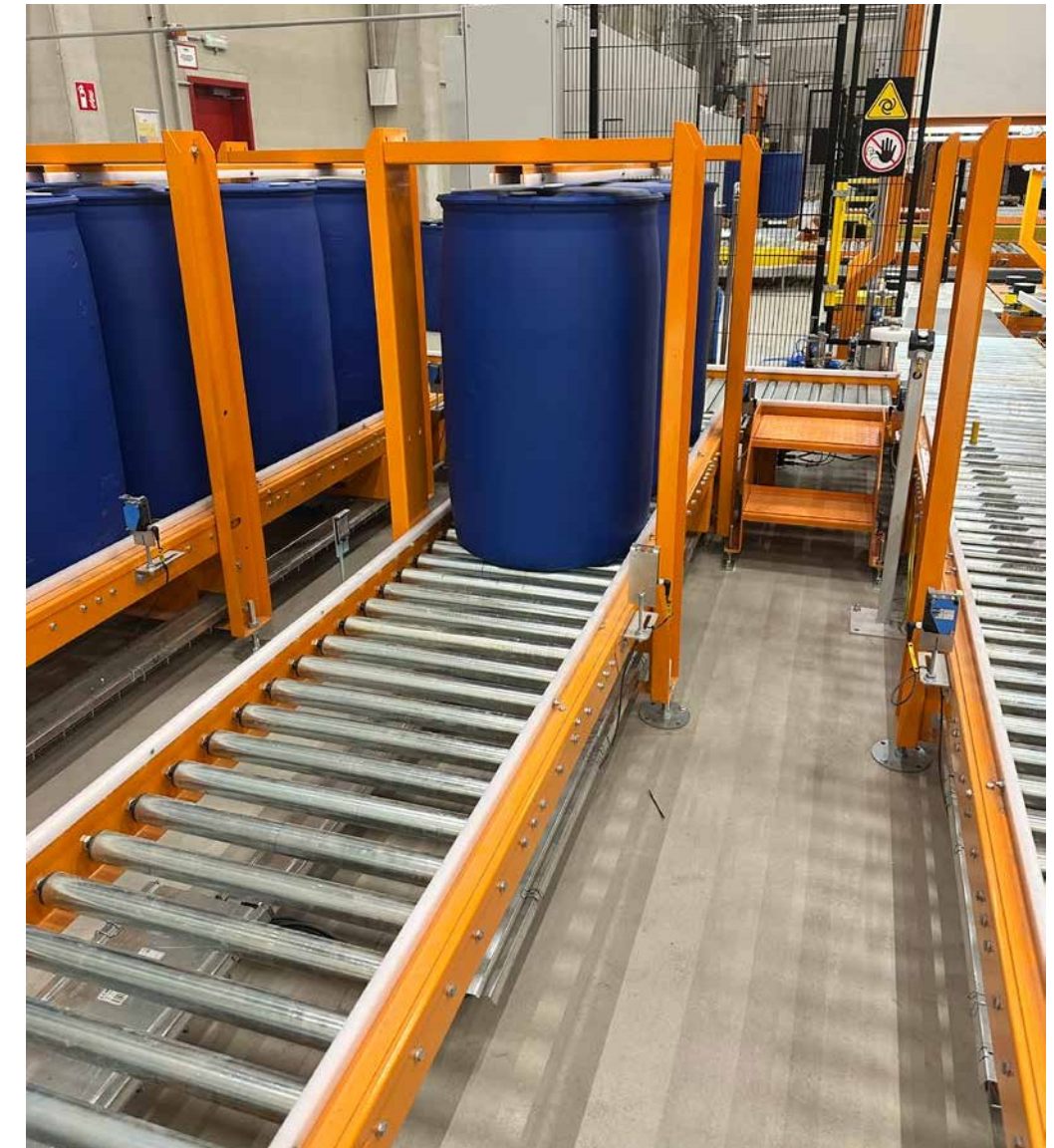
"We want to profile ourselves as a full chain service provider for our customers," says Luc Mertens, site manager at Alochem. Mertens worked closely with Vermeulen Ingenieursbureau from Helmond on the design and construction of the logistics hub, which took around two years. "Vermeulen has an enormous database of knowledge about all Feige and MSK products and machines. We wanted the best machines available, but through a single point of contact and optimally integrated within a single system. Vermeulen made that happen for us: we don't have to work with two different companies, but can simply contact Vermeulen, who acts as Alochem's ambassador at MSK and Feige."

SMART CHOICES IN DESIGN

"The filling line starts with a telescopic belt from MSK, which unloads the drums from trailers outside," explains Edwin Vermeulen. He supervised the entire process and ensured that Alochem's wishes and requirements were met as closely as possible by the two German manufacturers. "Then This is followed by a roller conveyor that guides the barrels into the building with a 180-degree turn. "Once inside, we have built in a buffer system for empty drums," Vermeulen continues. "A robot places the empty drums on pallets. The drums are then strapped horizontally in a fully automated process and transported to the pallet filling machines."

"We wanted to be able to fill both barrels and IBCs, as automatically as possible."

Luc Mertens, Alochem



Supply of empty drums.

AUTOMATION

This brings us to the point where Alochem made a strategic, well-considered choice, explains Mertens. "We wanted to be able to fill both drums and IBCs at our location, with as much automation as possible. But the more you automate, the lower your capacity. We could have opted for more capacity, but then we would not have been flexible. We would not have been able to fill both IBCs and drums on the same filling lines for our customers. Nevertheless, we opted for automation so that we can be as flexible as possible towards our customers, now and in the future."

THREE PALLET FILLING MACHINES

Alochem currently has three pallet filling machines at the new hub: one for acids and alkalis, one for ATEX products, and a third for all other products. "All three have their own entrance for IBCs and for pallets with drums," Vermeulen continues. The design takes into account a fourth

line, for future expansion. Ultimately, the various lines converge again on a single central roller conveyor. "With another built-in buffer function. There, the drums are finally strapped vertically and are ready for transport."

FULL TRACK & TRACE

A special feature of the installation that Vermeulen realised for Alochem is the high degree of track & trace in every step of the logistics process. Each package is given a unique ID that is scanned several times during the process. Vermeulen: "The system continuously reports the weight of each product that has been loaded." This is not only useful for quickly seeing whether the processes are running smoothly, but also means that Alochem can quickly isolate the problem in the unlikely event of complaints or problems. "We can quickly and accurately determine which batch may be problematic. That batch will then be very small. This can greatly limit any damage and helps to find a solution quickly."

FILLING



Palletising system for placing empty drums on pallets and strapping them.

100% WITHIN SIX MONTHS

Alochem started using the installation built by Vermeulen in February and scaled up to full capacity in October. "Training staff always takes time," says Mertens, "but we prioritise thoroughness over

speed. What's more, we consider reaching full capacity within just over six months to be a very good result." Meanwhile, with intensive support from Vermeulen, Alochem is continuing to work on optimising the installation's software via the central warehouse management system.

"We now have the most advanced technology in the field of chemical logistics."

Luc Mertens, Alochem



Mobile ATEX filling machine from Feige for drums and IBCs.

system. Mertens: "In terms of hardware, we are already 100% successful: we are the proud owners of the most advanced technology available in the field of chemical logistics. Now it's a matter of getting the software automation to 100%. Vermeulen helps with that, knows the whole world and gives excellent advice. And if we have any questions, we get quick remote support from MSK or Feige," concludes Mertens. "The lines of communication are short and the support is superb. It's really guidance from A to Z, just like we like to offer our own customers." •

Altreia Logistics Group is one of the top five logistics service providers in Belgium and specialises in chemical logistics. The group provides logistics services for the transport of full loads, a specialisation of subsidiaries Trafuco and Haesaerts Intermodal (formerly Altreia Bulk and Liquids) and Alders International Transport. The new **Alochem** chemical hub adds extra value to the logistics chain, with a specific focus on hazardous chemical liquids and high-quality solid products. In addition to storage and distribution services for ADR goods, Altreia can now also offer chemical producers additional services such as repackaging, cooling and heating, filling, mixing or adding liquids according to recipe. This enables the group to provide an integrated supply chain solution for chemical liquids and high-quality solid products.