Press Release

Colruyt Group invests in hydrogen as a green energy vector

Official inauguration of the new hydrogen plant

Hal, 9 March 2016. *Colruyt Group officially opens the new hydrogen plant within the framework of the "Don Quichote*" project. Located on the Dassenveld site in Hal, where the group has a distribution centre, this plant has the aim of demonstrating the technical and economic feasibility of a hydrogen storage and transport system for green electricity, produced from wind farms and solar panels. The system is tested on tangible applications specific to logistics but also relating to mobility and global management of energy resources. "Through this initiative, the group is seeking to participate in the development of a hydrogen market. With our partners, we believe in the establishment of a clean system drawing on renewable energy sources", explains Jef Colruyt, CEO of Colruyt Group. "With this project, it's a matter of convincing all the stakeholders of the opportunities offered by hydrogen as an energy vector. Because only a generalised choice will overcome the final barriers that still need to be conquered." The project is supported by the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH JU), which is a public/private partnership established by the European Commission, industries specialising in hydrogen and the world of research.*

A 100% clean energy vector

Hydrogen, as an energy vector, seems to be the most suitable alternative to fossil fuels. Upstream, thanks to the electrolysis process – voltage diffusion either in water or air – it is possible to generate "green" hydrogen from a renewable energy source, such as wind or solar. Downstream, its combustion releases only water vapour and does not cause any greenhouse gas emissions.

Storing renewable energies

In 2012, during the first hydrogen test within the context of the European Interreg IV project, Colruyt Group hosted the first hydrogen plant, in collaboration with WaterstofNet and Hydrogenics. Supplied by a wind turbine and solar panels, the intention was to test certain logistical applications equipped with a fuel cell.

The plant linked to the "Don Quichote" project has been joined to the existing installation. It will allow for the testing of the PEM electrolyser compared to the initial alkaline electrolyser, as well as doubling its production capacity. The station is also equipped with a 120 kW fuel cell, capable of reconverting hydrogen into electricity.

Concrete applications

In terms of logistics, the plant can supply automotive equipment equipped with a fuel cell. To date, Colruyt Group has 11 pallet trucks equipped with such technology. At the end of 2015, the group will expand the fleet with 200 additional fuel cells.

In terms of mobility, the station supplies the Hyundai i35, tested for the last year by staff within the group. Additionally, DATS 24, the fuel supplier for the group and CNG pioneer in Belgium, is keeping a

close eye on developments, so that it can be ready for the presumed future transition from CNG to hydrogen.

“Our experiences with the hydrogen vehicle, in combination with DATS 24’s experience gained from the expansion of the CNG network, confirm our ambition to further invest in this technology and the required infrastructure”, adds Jef Colruyt.

Finally, in terms of energy, hydrogen seems to be a reliable method for managing the electricity requirements of the site. The surplus produced by the wind turbines or solar panels is stored as hydrogen rather than fed into the network. This hydrogen can then be reconverted into electricity on days with low energy production rates. This is what is known as an "energy buffer" method.

Sustainability is in the Group's genes

Sustainable entrepreneurship is in the genes of the Colruyt Group. It represents an integral part of the group's culture, which can be seen in the goal of creating sustainable added value on the basis of its values and expertise in distribution. "It initially represents an economic boost, it's about creating positive dynamics for the company and the environment", explains Jef Colruyt. "It is for this reason that the group is investing further and will continue to do so in renewable energies, which will eventually make it possible to achieve a greater independence from fossil fuels and offer a solution to the resulting climatic and geopolitical problems. " This is also the goal of Eoly, the producer and supplier of green energy within the group.

For more information:

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About the "Don Quichote" project

"Don Quichote » - *stands for Demonstration of New Qualitative Innovative Concept of Hydrogen Out of Wind Turbine Electricity - is a collaborative project steered by the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH JU), within the framework of the "seventh framework programme for technological research and development" of the European Union. Better known by the abbreviation 7e PC (or FP7 in English), this programme confinances research, technological development and demonstration projects, with high European added-value, and transnational in nature. Among the parties involved in the "Don Quichote" project, in addition to Colruyt Group, there are WaterstofNet (Belgium), TUV Rheinland (Germany), the European Commission, PE International (Germany), Icelandic New Energy (Iceland), FAST/European Hydrogen Association (Italy) and Hydrogenics (Belgium), responsibility for coordinating the project. "Don Quichote" benefits from an overall subsidy of €2,954,846.

About Colruyt Group

Colruyt Group is active in the distribution of food products and non-food products throughout Belgium, France and Luxembourg, with around 500 stores under its own management and over 500 affiliated stores. In Belgium, these stores include Colruyt, OKay, Bio-Planet, Dreamland and Dreambaby and affiliated stores Spar and Spar Compact. In France, in addition to the affiliated stores Coccinelle, CocciMarket and Panier Sympa, the group also boasts some 70 Colruyt stores. The group is also active in the food service sector (delivering to hospitals, company kitchens, businesses within the hotel and catering sector) in France (Pro à Pro) and in Belgium (Solucious). The other areas of activity include fuel distribution (DATS 24), digital printing solutions and document management (Symeta) and green energy production (Eoly). Colruyt Group employs over 28,000 staff and achieved an annual turnover of 8.9 billion EUR in 2014/2015. Colruyt is listed on the Euronext Bruxelles (COLR) stock exchange under code ISIN BE0974256852.