

From Wilhelm II to the traceable Supply Chain of ethical sourced Down and Feathers

VDFI E.V. LOOKS BACK ON 100 YEARS OF ITS ASSOCIATION HISTORY


To celebrate its 100th anniversary the Association of the German Down & Feather Industry has invited to the origin of its genesis to Berlin. From Schleswig-Holstein to Bavaria the largest German bed-feather and bedding companies sent their management to the Spree. Friendly associations congratulated as well as representatives of certification and auditing companies, universities, exhibition companies, media and animal welfare organizations. Politicians praised in particular the socio-political and standardization legal merits of the VDFI.



The parliamentary state secretary of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Mr. Peter Bleser, MDP, gave in his speech the importance of sociopolitical consumer and animal protection broad space. After focusing on environmental protection in the 80s and the issues of food safety in the 90's in recent times the focus has shifted to livestock farming. There would just be a beginning of a development whose aim is to become leading in animal welfare in Europe. So the sector could use the change in values of the society for a differentiation from competitors and profile themselves over the unique proposition traceability.

The chairman of the parliamentary committee for Food and Agriculture, Alois Gerig, MP, congratulated the association for 100 years bed-feather industry in good as well as in difficult times. He praised the dialogue orientation of the association with politics, associations and animal welfare organizations and underlined the readiness to continue the talks: "Only when politics and people talk, one can achieve positives together."

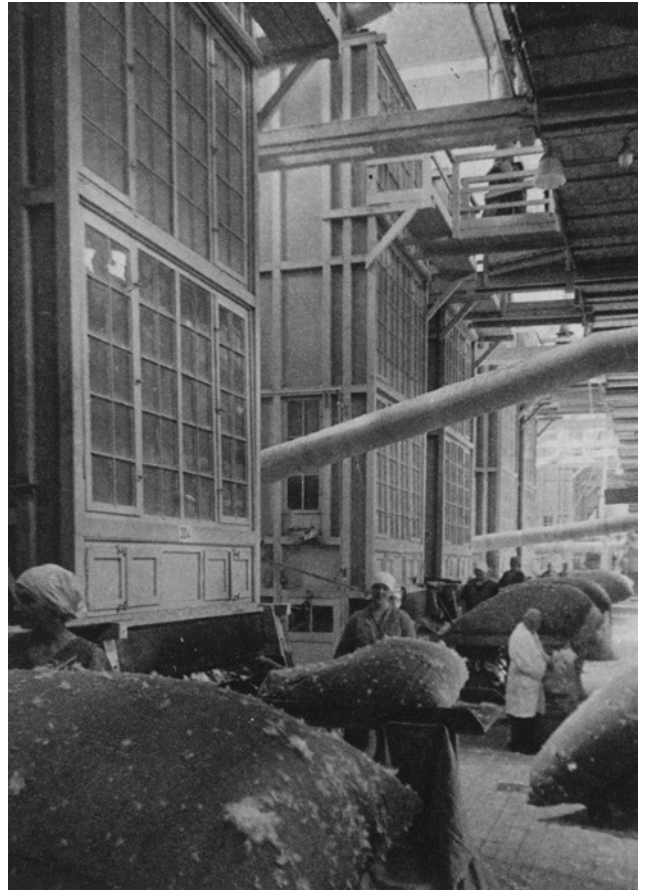
The chairman of the association, Friedrich-Wilhelm Verse, took in his lecture the audience on to an exciting journey through the time: The cradle of today's VDFI stood 1915 in Berlin. In a cold, grim war winter full of heavy snowstorms, when heating materials were in short supply and a warming blanket could decide about life and death, Emperor Wilhelm II. committed himself personally in providing the population with down comforters during the war years through establishing a common organization of bedding manufacturers. Because during the wartime travel options were restricted and dangerous, two regional organizations were established in December 1915 – one in northern Germany and one in the south. In the privation postwar years both decided 1921 to merge to the Union of Bed-Feather Manufacturers. Until 1945 the development of uniform guidelines for descriptions of the goods at the bedding retailers took a large room – the RAL regulations became valid. With the development of the Nazi dictatorship a state allocation system on the issuing of import licenses for feathers and downs was constructed.

Weekly representatives of the bedding industry met with a representative of the surveillance office in Berlin to test the conformity with the import samples. Negotiations followed to enforce quotas and foreign exchange allocations and the distribution of import quotas for the German bedding manufacturers.

At the beginning of World War II the association of the bedding manufacturers was renamed "War Community of Bed-feather Factories". After World War II, in 1946, parallel with the British, the French and American occupation zone, three new regional organizations were established.



Verse drew the bow of the association history to the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 and thus to the new working group of the German bedding industry, which was formed from the merger of the three regional associations. In the 50s the association activities shifted to fields of quality testing and promotional activities, inter alia mainly to position the proven products with natural filling materials feathers and downs against the new synthetic bedding materials. In particular, the emerging discussion about allergies, which began with house dust allergy, required scientific research and an information policy until it was assignable that down comforters and pillows are free of mites. The number of employees in the sector increased significantly - especially since the companies started to offer ready-made comforters and pillows to the trade. And the association became a new scope as an employers' organization.



In 1990, the working group got a new name: for the first time under the today's familiar name

VDFI - Association of the German Down and Feather Industry. In the same year it got to feel the consequences of the European integration. The European commission demanded that the EU member states should adapt and combine the labeling of the filling material downs and feathers with the European textile labelling directive. All necessary labeling regulations, product standards, test standards and definitions had to be renewed in and with all European countries. At this target the VDFI was intensively involved. And 10 years later in 2000 the EN 12934 replaced the RAL.



Parallel with the subjects of standardization animal protection took an ever greater room in the field of the association activities. 1995 VDFI initiated the first European agreement regulating the breeding of ducks and

WIR MACHEN DIE BETTEN



geese in agricultural livestock. After four years of intensive work with animal welfare organizations, scientists, and institutions the agreement was adopted and gradually taken into the national legislations. The next step for the member companies was the voluntary agreement to make the origin of the raw material traceable and to get it audited. Further steps are in preparation, so Verse, in order to get an evidence of ethical behavior at the sourcing of downs and feathers. The goal is a fully global traceable supply chain with ethically sourced downs and feathers.

Already before the event the VDFI took different actions to lead attention to the anniversary: These included an innovation competition - advertised for students of different disciplines to get the use of downs and feathers artistic, functional and thru marketing highlighted. Innovative ideas and approaches in using a natural, ecologically valuable commodity were awarded at Heimtextil 2016.

Next was an illustrated children's book about Oscar and the adventures with his down comforter: from the knight's cloak over the flying carpet to the wigwam. The production costs were covered by all VDFI member companies, in addition 1 Euro per book went as a donation to the foundation Herzenswunsche e.V., a nationwide operating non-profit association, which realizes since 1992 seriously ill children and young people long held wishes. 70 volunteers and three full-time employees try with parents, doctors, therapists and the affected children to establish a close contact to find out what wish could give a child new courage and strength. A following spontaneous collection for the foundation Herzenswunsche yielded again around € 2,300, so that an amount of more than € 17,300 in total as "Motivation Help" became available.

The end of the evening the guests enjoyed at the Berlin Waterworks.

