ATB takes a firm foothold in Rotterdam through cooperation with COUNT

Amsterdam Trade Bank (ATB) – other to what the name may suggest – has a lot to offer to Rotterdam and its surroundings. The trade bank is specialized in international commodity finance, shipping finance and asset-based finance. Within the relatively young financial institution, getting a firmer footing in the Rijnmond region is high on its agenda. It was therefore a nice boost that COUNT was recently brought in as a customer.

Developing activities in the Rotterdam region feels like coming home for Harris Antoniou (Chief Executive Officer ATB). He graduated from the Erasmus University in 1993 and started his career at Bank Mees & Hope at the Coolsingel. Antoniou talks about the added value of the bank for the Rotterdam region. “We see plenty of opportunities to support entrepreneurs in their activities and recognize the value of this region. Rotterdam is one of the most important crossroads of flows of goods in the world. The commodity background of Amsterdam Trade Bank is very useful here. In addition, we offer a broad spectrum of products to traders in raw materials, producers, logistic companies and financial institutions. That is why we are able to provide the entrepreneurs particularly in the Rotterdam region with their financing needs.”

At the offices of COUNT, located at the Westerkade, managing director Pieter Janssens and founder Peter Goedvolk tell about their activities and cooperation with Amsterdam Trade Bank. On behalf of the bank, Wim Kok, Asset Based Finance Director, joins. There is an obvious click between the gentlemen. Mutual trust is the basis for joining forces. Kok talks about his role and the vision of Amsterdam Trade Bank. “I have ample banking experience, with twenty years at Deutsche Bank and seventeen years at Lloyds Bank on my resume. Until last year, I worked at Maersk Shipping Lines, where I was responsible for setting up a Trade Finance Unit in the Netherlands. My mandate within ATB is to expand the asset-based finance activities. There are many opportunities in this field, especially in the Rotterdam region, because asset based finance is linked to business assets such as terminals, equipment and maritime assets. As a bank we distinguish ourselves by our entrepreneurial approach and short lines. Helping our customers to succeed in their goals is our main ambition.

Way forward is a challenging path

This was also noted by Peter Goedvolk. He is an independent entrepreneur for over 35 years. In the mid-1980s he took over Argos Oil, that under his leadership developed into a large company. In 2011 he sold a large part of his shares and in 2014 he resigned as CEO. But it was far from time to retire, so it did not take him long before he developed new activities, including setting up COUNT. “We trade in commodities, engage in renewables, food and energy related products and support companies within the logistics industry to modernize their business in a sustainable manner, with the ultimate goal to optimize supply chains. A stable financial partner is of course a prerequisite when setting up a new organization. At Argos Oil I was dealing with a consortium of banks since that was a billion-EURO business. For COUNT I was searching for the most suitable structure. Until I crossed paths with Wim again. I knew him pretty well from the past, we are going back almost 25 years. When I mentioned that I was looking for a suitable financing structure for an expansion of a terminal in Rotterdam /Vlaardingen, we were soon on the same page. We understood each other well and there was no misunderstanding about the professional input and large network of Amsterdam Trade Bank”. “Janssens adds: In the growing phase of your company, you always look for a partner who understands you. We found our partner in the Amsterdam Trade Bank. Together we are walking a great, although challenging path. A bio-based circular economy is the future and we are anticipating on this already.”
Goedvolk: “The terminal will be a green hub. Especially within a large port such as Rotterdam, the need for green initiatives is huge. We want to be at the center and forefront of this development and it is also our ambition to create the greenest possible terminal. With our capabilities, vision and background, it feels like our duty to actively contribute to a better world. Amsterdam Trade Bank shares this ambition. The World Health Organization recently published that 7 million people die each year from air pollution. That basically says everything about the scale of the current problem and the need to become greener. For a turnaround it’s necessary to take effective measures now. We would therefore like to see that the government makes it more attractive for companies to follow a sustainable (green) direction. Janssens adds: “At COUNT we are not pioneers, but we are fairly ahead. Despite the complicated regulations, we persist in our mission: to invest in a more circular economy.” Amsterdam Trade Bank at its side gives COUNT extra confidence. Amsterdam Trade Bank and COUNT are also working on a new initiative: a blockchain project linked to a supply chain in the renewable commodity sector. We will undoubtedly hear more about that in due course."