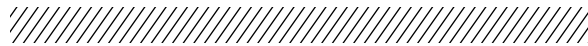


32. Recor Bedding



Introduction of the P.E.T. bed

recentre



Johan Oyen © Cedric Vanaken

The history of Recor Bedding begins in 1949 when René Corthouts started the small mattress factory Recor. At the time there was little talk of innovation or sustainability. Only low budget mattresses were being developed. In the Sixties mattresses were relegated to the background and Recor focused mainly on suites and furniture. Recor Bedding was only founded in the late Eighties. Some ten years ago Johan Oyen was appointed the new manager. From his start at Recor Bedding he has tried to bring more innovation into the 'world of sleep'. That proved not to be always easy until the bed and mattresses manufacturer asked the famous designer Axel Enthoven to work on the image and products of Recor Bedding last year. The company decided to work on improving the production process too, to ensure they can deliver a finished product both in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

'Recor Bedding consists of three important components.

I see it as the duty of each self-respecting company to deal with production in an ecological way.

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We produce beds, slatted bases and mattresses under our own name Recor Bedding. We principally aim to offer comfort to our customers. In addition we produce and distribute beds, slatted bases and mattresses for Scapa. But we are particularly proud of the Indigo collection. With this collection we offer our customers sturdy materials which are completely made to measure in our Genk factory.' It is mainly with this collection that Recor Bedding wishes to be progressive.

A changing market and the crisis which was also felt in the bed sector incited the company to reflect on the direction it wishes to take with Indigo. 'We wish to be innovative, but we noticed that our customers had a rather dull image of us. It was time to update that image and to brainstorm on what we want to achieve with Recor Bedding and Indi-

go in particular.' Director Johan Oyen knew he wanted to take a more sustainable direction. 'Those ideas originate at seminars and meetings with colleagues and competitors. As an entrepreneur you can do nothing but to get involved in the sustainability story. I see it as the duty of each self-respecting company to deal with production in an ecological way.'

We think it is important to create something that the customer does not have to throw away after a few years.

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Recor Bedding approached the famous designer Axel Enthoven. The company wants to create the sustainable story of Indigo together with him. 'We have opted for Axel Enthoven because he already designed a number of beds for us some fifteen years ago. Two of those beds are still in production because of their timeless style.' From the brainstorming session with the designer it appeared that Recor Bedding has a very reliable and flexible character, but that it is not innovative and sustainable enough. Axel Enthoven was the first to try and attract the forty-plus public in a new way. 'We have toyed around with the male/female principle. We have different mattresses for men and women. Axel has started the design of a very attractive box spring. The sustainability of this box spring lays in the design. Axel has designed a timeless bed. A sturdy bed that suits any interior. The bed is not particularly made from sustainable products, wood and cotton were mainly used for the furnishing. Materials that obviously also last for years. Today, we live in a consumer society. We think it is important to create something that the customer does not have to throw away after a few years. We also do not want to change the whole production time and time again.'

Apart from selling a timeless bed, Johan Oyen thought it was important to look deeper into the green idea too. And that's how Axel Enthoven came up with the PET bed, a trendy design bed that will especially attract younger people. Recycled PET bottles are the raw material of the bed and mattress cover. 'The fabrics are created by Buzzispace. Together with the design consultant they have come up with a system in which PET bottles are ground to fibres and those fibres are made into felt.'

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The introduction of the PET bed has not got the immediate effect Recor Bedding hoped for. 'People find it difficult to understand sleeping on bottles. They ask themselves whether it is not unhealthy. The PET bed is a completely new concept. End consumers always need time to get used to new ideas and materials. The fabric also seems to be too rough for use in the bed sector.' Recor Bedding in the meantime continues to optimise this product. 'We are looking for softer organic furnishing fabrics for example.' New plans are growing at Recor Bedding to continue building on this bed and the sustainable story. 'We will be sitting around the table with Axel Enthoven again soon. We don't know what the result will be but it is sure that we want to remain sustainable and innovative in our next products. We strongly believe in this and I think our customers do too. We have gained more customers who see a future in us with the PET bed'. Recor Bedding also won the Green award at the furniture fair in Brussels with its PET bed. Being a pioneer mainly requires audacity and tenacity. It is increasingly important in our society to be sustainable and innovating, but we are a commercial company. It remains important that our innovative ideas are also economically profitable.'



P.E.T. bed fuchsia
© Recor Bedding

Recor Bedding not only wants to be sustainable in its production. It wants to show the good example regarding the environment too. 'Being sustainable is not the same as being ecological. We tried to keep the environmental impact as low as possible in the company.' Together with Fedustria, the Federation for the Belgian textile, wood and furniture industry, an energy audit was carried out in the enterprise. 'We have adapted our waste and energy policy. We have installed other fuel boilers and other lighting frames. Heat released during the production process is recuperated. Waste is sorted more strictly. We also had a look at the production process and adjusted it here and there. Production now is smoother and faster. There is less waste and products reach the customer more smoothly.' Recor Bedding also produces a natural mattress at the request of the customers, made from cotton and horse tail hair, hundred percent natural products. 'Research has already been conducted into the recuperation of mattresses to develop an even more sustainable product, but provisionally we can't seem to find a solution mainly due to hygienic reasons.'

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Even though the first 'greenest' idea was not immediately appreciated by the general public, Recor Bedding was not swayed. 'I regularly invite other companies to see whether a co-operation is possible.'



P.E.T. bed lime
© Recor Bedding



P.E.T. bed orange
© Recor Bedding





Sustainable Success Stories

I have sat around the table with the people of the company De Saedeleir for example. They produce fabrics based on fibres from maize plants. I think that's a fantastic principle. Those fabrics are mainly used as tarpaulin in gardens. We have looked into their possible use in the furnishing of beds. Unfortunately they are fragile fabrics that disintegrate in time. We continue to search.'

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Kizzy Vanhorne for REcentre
Interviewee / Johan Oyen, General Manager

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www.recorbedding.be

Sector • Furniture

Year of foundation • 1987

Number of employees • 80

Turnover (2010) •
12 million EUR