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LH Lift Oy celebrates 40 years

FAMILY BUSINESS EXPANDS FROM HAAPASUO TO CHINA

Finnish company LH Lift Oy is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Based in the quiet rural community of Haapasuo in Kuusa (Laukaa), Central Finland, the family business has expanded to become a global player in its field. In 2007 the company established its own subsidiary in Ningbo, China, close to Shanghai.

“We produce durable three point linkage parts and rear hitches for industrial and retail clients, including Valtra. Our competitors are global corporations that manufacture components throughout the world. In order to keep up with the competition, we decided to establish our own factory in China,” explains Kari Piltonen, Managing Director of LH Lift.

The company has annual net sales of EUR 7 million and employs around 40 people at its factory in Laukaa, Finland, and another 20 in Ningbo, China.

The Chinese factory purchases, machines and assembles components. These are then shipped in containers by sea to Haapasuo, where some of the components are further machined. The components are then used in assembly and supplied to customers as needed. Some of the components are machined and assembled entirely in Haapasuo. The company’s management, sales and R&D operations are situated in Kuusa (Laukaa).

“We divide the work between the Ningbo and Laukaa factories according to where it makes most sense to the work. Our Ningbo factory operates according to the exact same quality standards as our Laukaa factory does,” Piltonen adds.

LH Lift’s biggest customer is Finnish tractor brand Valtra, which is part of the international AGCO Corporation. The products delivered to Valtra’s Suolahti factory include top links, lift rods, lower link arms, lower link arm stabilisers, quick coupling hooks, steps, rear hitches and drawbars. These products are used around the world on Valtra tractors. New OEM customers are also being sought all the time, such as other tractor factories and vehicle manufacturers.

“Our LH Link pivoting front linkage is our best known product sold to end customers. We worked together with Valtra developing its articulated X Series tractors, for which we supplied the key components. We also manufacture Nordic type of drawbars and pull equipment here in Finland that can be retrofitted to imported tractors,” Piltonen says.

LH Lift began operations in 1975 in Haapasuo in Kuusa (Laukaa) when Paavo Viikki, a former employee at the Valmet tractor factory, began welding rear

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hitches for Valmet 502 tractors as a subcontractor. At the time subcontracting was quite rare for the tractor manufacturer.

LH Lift continues to work in the countryside, in a farmyard surrounded by fields, but the original production facilities at the end of the barn have almost disappeared next to the modern factory buildings. The somewhat unusual location can be explained by the company's history and its links to Valtra, as the tractor factory is located just a few kilometres away and Viikki's family home is still in the farmyard.

Originally called Laukaan Hitsaustyö, the company has remained in the ownership of the Viikki family throughout its 40-year history. The company was founded by Paavo Viikki, and his sons Jukka, Eero and Timo now also work for the company.

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