Birkenfeld, 6th August 2020

New Start: opportunities for the catering industry

proHeq Managing Director Marten van der Mei sees positive developments

**The global pandemic is posing major challenges for restaurateurs and hoteliers around the world. International equipment suppliers are therefore developing various concepts to support this important economic sector – and proHeq GmbH is one of them. With its premium brands WMF Professional and HEPP, the renowned manufacturer is offering support on a broad scale. Marten van der Mei, Vice President Professional Coffee Machines for the DACH region of the WMF Group and also Managing Director of proHeq GmbH since May 2020, gives an insight into the current situation for proHeq customers, as well as the outlook for future developments – both industry-wide and within the Group.**

**How would you assess the current situation in the industry?**

We can see that the relaxation of regulations is clearly reviving both the catering and hotel industries, particularly in the DACH region. Booking levels are quite good, especially in the holiday regions: Austrian businesses are already reporting being at maximum capacity – and even a corona hotspot like Ischgl is benefiting from the trend for people to spend their holidays close to home.

**How does proHeq’s “New Start” campaign support restaurateurs and hoteliers?**

For the recovery to be successful in the long term, it is essential that operators pay meticulous attention to hygiene standards. As part of this, some hoteliers are even offering their own corona tests before the guest checks in. The proHeq sales and marketing specialists have therefore put a lot of thought into deciding how we can support the industry in the best possible way. We are introducing concepts that show how a buffet or service at the table or in the hotel room can look, now and in the future. There are also new service ideas, such as a served or pre-portioned buffet, but also the hygienic transportation of the food to the room. Of course, we support all these concepts with the right products, all offering the usual high-quality finish and design. In doing so, we focus on our core competence: the laid table and the buffet.

**How do you see the development of the industry in the next six to twelve months?**

The industry will recover slowly. Looking specifically at tourist areas, I am sure that last year’s figures will be achieved once again, based on a monthly comparison – possibly even improved. I take a more critical view of the cities. Cultural tourism will only restart there very slowly, because there is a lack of foreign guests in particular. Business tourism will also have a very hard time. We ourselves have noticed in our daily working life that we can sometimes hold our meetings more efficiently using digital media. I anticipate it will take around two years before we can hopefully match the 2019 figures again in these areas.

**What about consumption?**

We are currently noticing that guests want to enjoy their time in the hotel or the food in the restaurant even more than before. They are therefore also willing to pay more for high-quality, perfect service. This means that the average bill per visit will increase if the restaurateur or hotelier can offer the guest a high-quality and first-class experience. And this is exactly where our concepts come in.

**A view of the future for your own company: WMF customers already benefit from being able to get “everything from a single source”. Will these synergies from the “Coffee machines” and “Hotel” divisions be strengthened further in the future?**

We will certainly move even closer together and develop other potential synergies. Ultimately, we serve the same clientele and the WMF, Schaerer, Curtis and HEPP brands are all synonymous with high quality and perfect service. But I have also had to learn that the motivation of hoteliers and restaurateurs to make an investment is very different. If we look at the procurement of coffee machines, then machine efficiency and durability, combined with excellent service, play a decisive role. On the other hand, when it comes to products from the hotel range, individual design preferences and culinary concepts are much more important. We meet the requirements in both areas and also still deliver from one source. This makes us and our brands the perfect partner for the restaurateur and hotelier.

**In which areas do you see the greatest innovation potential for the Hotel business unit?**

We will certainly set new standards in the Hotel business unit in the future. We will be able to coordinate the ranges for the entire laid table and buffet and thus offer our customers and the end customer an experience that is second to none. Our products will particularly raise the bar a little higher in the areas of individualisation and surface finishing. This focus will distinguish us from competitors who buy “off the shelf” in Asia or other countries. We are thereby emphasising the high sustainability and quality standards that our entire Group (Groupe SEB) has set itself even more strongly than before.

**What are your strategic priorities as the new Managing Director?**

First of all, we have to get through the Corona crisis as unscathed as possible. This will prove harder for a lot of other market players than it will be for proHeq GmbH, because we are very well positioned with our two strong brands, WMF Professional and HEPP – both nationally and internationally. If we look further into the future, we will inspire our customers with new service offers and innovative, holistic solution concepts for the table and buffet.

We are already working at full speed to develop new and extended collections, always focusing on the medium to higher price segment.

Anyone who follows our announcements, or has subscribed to our newsletter, will see that we are continuing to launch completely new products, even in these difficult times. We also hope very much that the upcoming Ambiente and Internorga trade fairs can take place. That is where we plan to inspire our customers with unique products, concepts and ranges – I am firmly convinced we will do that.

**Image request**

Images are available for downloading from our media portal <http://press-n-relations.amid-pr.com>. Simply by searching for the term „Marten van der Mei“.

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| **Further information:**  proHeq GmbH  Carl-Benz-Str. 10 – 75217 Birkenfeld  Tel.: +49 7231 4885-0  Fax: +49 7231 4885-83 [info@proheq.de](mailto:info@proheq.de)  www.proheq.de | **Press and public relations:**  WMF Press Office  c/o Press’n’Relations GmbH  Désirée Müller und Monika Nyendick  Magirusstraße 33 – D-89077 Ulm  Tel. +49 731 96287-32 Fax +49 731 96287-97  wmf@press-n-relations.de  [www.press-n-relations.de](http://www.press-n-relations.de) |

**About proHeq**

proHeq GmbH is a global premium supplier for restaurants, hotels, airlines and system catering. As a subsidiary of the WMF Group, it is one of the most important specialists in the field of professional hotel equipment. Both HEPP and WMF Professional come together under the umbrella of the proHeq company – both brands still operate independently on the market and therefore have different brand strategies and sales structures. Since the end of 2016 proHeq GmbH has been part of the French conglomerate Groupe SEB.