

## About purveyors to the royal household and other royal enterprises

Some companies are allowed to call themselves purveyors to the royal household or carry the designation 'royal'. In the Netherlands, the label 'Hofleverancier' (=Purveyor to the Dutch Royal Household) dates back to 1806 when Louis Napoleon introduced the designation 'Marchand du Roi' (French for 'Merchant to the King') in the low countries. After Napoleonic times, King Willem I introduced the designation 'Hofleverancier' in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (1815). A purveyor to the royals was in those days someone who supplied goods to the court, and who had been granted the right to carry this title by a member of the royal family. In the 1980s, discussions arose about whether certain companies were actually worthy of the title of 'purveyor to the royal household', eventually leading to a new law regulating the official designations 'purveyor to the royal household' and 'royal', introduced in 1987. The former designation, 'purveyor to the royal household', is intended for local and regional providers of products and services; the latter, 'royal', is intended for major Dutch companies. These designations basically reflect the quality, solidity and continuity of the company in question.

The legislation introduced in the Netherlands in 1987 was intended to regulate the right to use aforementioned designations. Many companies that used to call themselves purveyors to the court lost that designation in 1987, because they failed to meet new criteria. Since 1987, only companies selected by Queen Beatrix were allowed to carry the title Bij Koninklijke Beschikking Hofleverancier (Purveyor to the Royal Household, by Royal Appointment); other members of the royal family are no longer allowed to grant this royal warrant. Exceptions were made for certain companies carrying the designation 'purveyor to the royal household' in the name of HRH Prince Bernhard (such as: Amstel breweries in Amsterdam, hunting and shooting centre Dorhout Mees in Biddinghuizen, Schimmelpenninck cigar makers in Wageningen, and billiard table manufacturer Wilhelmina in Amsterdam); these royal warrants will probably lapse upon the death of the prince. A uniform coat of arms was also introduced in 1987 to go with aforementioned designation. An official purveyor to the royal household might actually never purvey anything to the royal family; and on the other hand, a company that does supply to the Dutch royals cannot automatically call itself a purveyor to the royal household. The main criteria to merit the designation 'purveyor to the royal household' are:

- A royal warrant can only be granted to companies that exist for at least one hundred years (preferably under the same name). There has to be clear and unequivocal information about a company's origins.

- The company has to occupy a prominent position in its sector, and have local or regional importance. The company's managers have to be of irreproachable conduct.
- The royal warrant will stand for twenty-five years, after which the company will have to apply for renewal. Renewal will also have to be applied for when the company changes its legal structure.

Applications for the designation 'purveyor to the royal household' can be submitted to the mayor of the town where the company is based. The mayor will pass the request on to the royal commissioner of the province, who will subsequently submit it to the Queen's personal secretary for final processing. By early 2004, the Netherlands had 327 registered purveyors to the royal household. Well-known purveyors are Maison de Bonneterie in Amsterdam and The Hague, Hooghoudt distillery in Groningen, and shoe factory H. Greve in Waalwijk.

The designation 'royal' is reserved for major, nationally or internationally operating companies and associations. In order to be eligible to carry the designation 'royal' in its name, a company first of all has to be Dutch. In the case of associations, there is the further stipulation that they may not have the propagation of political, religious or ideological ideas as their objective. Companies are only made 'royal' to mark the occasion of an exceptional anniversary (one hundredth, one hundred and twenty-fifth, one hundred and fiftieth, etc. anniversary). Royal enterprises may not put the designation 'royal' on their products, and one company can never carry both designations ('purveyor to the royal household' and 'royal'). In 1991-1992, for example, supermarket chain Albert Heijn was forced to remove the coat of arms of purveyor to the royal household from all its supermarkets. That was because parent company Ahold had been made Royal Ahold to commemorate Albert Heijn's one hundred year existence. If a company can call itself 'royal', it can also – in its letterhead – use the royal crown. Although this crown can be stylized a little, the headband with five diadems should always be clearly discernible. Well-known royal enterprises are Royal Auping (1888) and Royal Wegenbouw Stevin/KWS (1901). Well-known royal associations are Royal Shipping Association Schuttevaer (1849) and Royal ANWB (Dutch version of the Automobile Association, founded in 1883).

In Belgium, the royal household uses the designation 'certified purveyor to the court of Belgium'. This title can be granted to a private person or to a company. Contrary to the Netherlands, the Belgian royal warrant does require its carrier to actually supply goods or services to the court (for a period of at least five years);

this can only be deviated from in specific cases. The certificate of purveyor to the court of Belgium is granted for a period of five years, and generally renewed taciturnly.

*Source*

Riezebos, J., Riezebos, R., (2004), *Verzamelde Merken (de betekenis van 3166 namen van producten en bedrijven verklaard) (met bijdragen van Ton den Boon)* [United Brands (the meaning of 3166 names of products and companies explained) (with contributions by Ton den Boon)]. Sdu Uitgevers, Den Haag. \*

*Reference(s)*

Krogt, M.R. van der (2000), *Een koninklijk gebaar (hofleveranciers in Nederland)* [A royal gesture (purveyors to the royal household in the Netherlands)]. Europese bibliotheek, Zaltbommel. \*

\* : Available in the EURIB library.