



## PRESS RELEASE

### 200-year-old Rotterdam tea trader Van Rees Group henceforth “Royal”

**Rotterdam, 5 July 2019 - Van Rees Group BV, founded in 1819 and one of the largest independent tea traders in the world in 2019, has been awarded the designation “Royal” by His Majesty King Willem-Alexander. In the Rotterdam office where the start of a festive anniversary celebration was inaugurated on 5 July 2019, the King’s Commissioner in The province of Zuid-Holland Mr Jaap Smit, in the presence of the Mayor of Rotterdam Mr Ahmed Aboutaleb and 150 business relations from all over the world, handed over the predicate to Rajith De Mel, Managing Director of Van Rees Group.**

"It is a privilege to steer this Royal company to an interesting future that lies ahead of us even after 200 years", said a delighted Rajith De Mel who, 25 years ago, started his career in the tea trade at Van Rees in Sri Lanka. Since 2012 he gave leadership to the activities there and has, since recently, been appointed to the helm of the tea trading house. "I sometimes compare Van Rees to an old tea bush that has already survived many storms, droughts and has stood the test of time. This comparison offers confidence and perspective to continue strengthening our market position in the world. For example by responding to new trends in tea such as specialty tea and the increasing focus on health and sustainability. We are 200 years old, but at the same time 200 years young. We have a global network of tea professionals who transfer their knowledge from generation to generation and who can respond well to the international market developments".

Van Rees Group, with its headquarters in Rotterdam, has a worldwide network of 12 international offices with exclusive representations in the most important tea producing countries. The supply of tea to private and public sectors, regardless of the country of origin, has made Van Rees the sizeable player that it is today. The company is known for the quality assurance and security of contract it offers to producers and buyers of tea. Since 2010, the shares of Van Rees Group have been held by Amsterdam Commodities NV, the trading company listed on Euronext Amsterdam in spices, nuts, dried fruits, tea, edible seeds and food ingredients. "With Acomo we have a solid and long-term shareholder on board who supports us in realizing our growth ambitions and is prepared to invest in the new growth opportunities that are still ahead of us", says De Mel.

Van Rees is one of the nearly 600 Dutch companies that currently hold the Royal warrant. The addition Royal is only granted to companies that deliver good performance, are solid and reliable and have a rich history. The history of the company goes back to 1819, when Jan van Rees founded a tea trading company in Zwolle, going door to door on horse and cart or by bicycle, selling tea in packets of 100-250 grams. Van Rees has been building its international network since 1950. In the year 2019 the group has 12 offices in the most important countries of origin where tea is bought in auctions (Indonesia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Malawi, Vietnam and India) and in the major consumer markets such as England, North America, Russia, Middle East and Europe. The packages of 250 grams have been replaced by bulk packing and shipments per container. In 2018 the market leader traded 75,000 tons of tea.

Since the eighties, there are no longer any members of the Van Rees family working in the company. Jan Maarten and Jan Wijnand van Rees, who as sons of trader Jan van Rees in the late forties travelled

abroad at a young age, attended the festive anniversary celebration. They were proud to be able to see the crown on the work of their ancestors.

After the official ceremony, the jubilee was celebrated on the 'SS Rotterdam', the former passenger ship of the Holland-America Line and later, cruise ship. The vessel is moored in the port of Rotterdam, which is still the commercial home of Van Rees after all these decades.

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Photo caption # 1:

*Commissioner of the King in The province of Zuid-Holland Mr Jaap Smit (left) hands over the Royal designation to Rajith de Mel (middle), CEO Van Rees Group in the presence of the Mayor of Rotterdam Mr Ahmed Aboutaleb (right) and 150 international invitees at the start of the festive jubilee celebrations 200 years of Rees. Van Rees was founded in 1819 and in 2019 it is one of the largest independent tea traders in the world.*



Photo caption # 2:

*The trade in tea remains craftsmanship. On a daily basis 50 traders and tea blenders are engaged in the physical tasting and testing of tea on taste and quality. Van Rees Group expects the Royal designation, which was awarded to the 200-year-old tea trader on 5 July 2019, to give a positive impetus to doing business worldwide and in particular the perception of reliability and quality.*

Note for editors

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For more information you can contact spokesperson Frank Witte, spokesperson on behalf of Van Rees Group BV, mobile +31 653736170 or email [f.witte@creativevenue.nl](mailto:f.witte@creativevenue.nl)

**More about the application for the Royal designation**

The predicate is not a right, but a favor granted by the King. To be eligible, a company must meet a number of strict criteria. For example, the company must be at least 100 years old and occupy a very prominent place in its field in the Netherlands, preferably with an international character. This takes into account the size of the company, the number of employees and the turnover. In addition, business operations must be flawless and the company, board members and supervisory directors must be well-known and of undisputed behavior. Future prospects and issues such as being a good employer, sustainability initiatives and business ethics also play an important role in the application which takes about a year.