



## Berte Qvarn

The natural choice

by Jenny Dal Zotto, Product Management & Marketing Oats

Berte Qvarn, Sweden have been milling wheat and rye for 450 years. When the biggest producer of oat milk in the world contacted Berte Qvarn to process oats for them, it was clear from day one that Bühler would design, build, and support running the plant.

Today, the family-owned company operates one of the most modern oat processing plants in the world – a testament to the revival of oats as a healthy and nutritious superfood, and perfectly in tune with the company’s far-sighted sustainability targets.

To find out more about Berte Qvarn, be sure to scan this QR Code or visit:

[www.buhlergroup.com/oat](http://www.buhlergroup.com/oat)



**H**elena Stenström’s gaze wanders over Berte Qvarn’s milling headquarters in Slöinge, located between Malmö and Gothenburg in the south of Sweden. On the right, adjacent to the Suseån river, stands the picturesque brick building, where her family started milling wheat a mere 14 generations ago.

The old hydroelectric power station is testament of their drive for sustainability and will soon be modernised to supply up to 40 percent of energy needs for the milling operations. To its left towers the modern wheat mill with the storage silos, where Sweden’s oldest family-owned company processes 70 thousand tonnes of wheat per year. On the far left, slightly elevated, the state-of-the-art oat processing plant catches her eye.

“These three buildings tell our company’s history in a nutshell. The stable business, and the knowledge in wheat milling that has

been passed from generation to generation. And then there’s the oat processing plant, not even two years old, which allows us to add another product to our range, to increase our expertise, and last but not least, to take a major step towards achieving our sustainability goals of reducing our footprint by 50 percent by 2030,” she explains.

Helena Stenström is Head of Sustainability of Berte Group, which includes an ice cream business with a market share of 20 percent in Sweden, an organic farm with 240 cows and just as many calves, and Berte Qvarn, the milling branch.

### Healthy & sustainable growth

So why did Berte Qvarn add oats to the menu? “As a family-owned company, we see it as our duty to consider the well-being of the next generations in all our business decisions. We’re working on a project together with local farmers called ‘towards a fossil-free, diversified farm’. It focuses on improving every step of the grain’s journey from farm to fork,” explains Ms Stenström.

“Oats play a vital part in this ecosystem in terms of crop rotation and add valuable nutrients to the soil. They’re a very popular, locally grown grain in Scandinavia, and offer a high level of antioxidants, fibre, vitamins, and essential minerals.”

On top of the numerous health and environmental benefits, there’s never been a better time to invest in oats. The oat market has experienced rapid growth during the pandemic, as consumer demand for healthy foods has soared over the past two years.

According to the industry research provider The Insight Partners, the global oat market is projected to reach up to US\$10 billion by 2028, up from around US\$7.8 billion in 2021.

### One little push

Naturally, Berte Qvarn had oats in their sights for some time, and as often in life, all it took was a little push in the right direction for the idea to kick-start into reality: Oatly, the world’s biggest producer



of oat milk, asked them to become their supplier.

Tomas Wennerholm, Global Oat Supply Manager at Oatly, remembers how smoothly the discussions went. “When two companies share the same values and vision, they’re building a partnership rather than negotiating a business agreement. We choose Berte Qvarn because of their close relationship with local farmers, and because of their reputation as a reliable partner in grain processing.

The fact that Berte Qvarn gets all their oats from farmers within 100 kilometers of their headquarters was a decisive factor as it perfectly fits our sustainability targets.” When the partnership was agreed and the ink was dry in 2019, time was at the essence.

Oatly is a fast-growing company, which supplies major retail stores on all continents and is the supplier of choice of the global coffee chain giant, Starbucks. The date for the first deliveries to Oatly’s processing facility in Malmö, 150 kilometres south of Slöinge, was set for February 2021.

## A willingness to grow

That’s where Magnus Lindblom, wheat miller turned oat miller at Berte Qvarn, comes into play. “Once I learned about the decision to start processing oats, I was on board immediately and volunteered to be trained as an oat miller after 20 years in wheat milling.

“I’m proud to work for Berte Qvarn and to be able to contribute to a more sustainable future. Adding oats to our portfolio was a natural choice for me, and I had to grab this chance. Not only because I’m convinced of the many benefits oats bring to the table, but to broaden my horizon and add new skills to my own portfolio,” he says.

“Luckily, we have a very experienced and committed partner on our side with Bühler, who already built and equipped the wheat mill with their state-of-the-art technology, so it was a seamless transition for all of us at Berte Qvarn.”

18 months after volunteering to be trained as an oat miller, Magnus Lindblom stands in one of the world’s most modern oat processing facilities and checks the process parameters on his tablet.

“Our intake capacity is 90 tons per hour, and our output is around 50 tons of finished product per hour. The Mercury MES (Manufacturing Execution System) provides us with all relevant process details at our fingertips.

“That’s an incredible level of efficiency if you compare it to the older days, when a miller had to constantly walk through the mill and check the parameters manually,” he explains.

Together with his colleague, Lindblom operates the entire plant in two shifts of twelve hours each. Thanks to this high level of automation and working in longer shifts, he has four days a week to enjoy with his family – another key benefit of an ultra-modern operation, and an example of the future of work many companies

# Industry Profile

are designing to attract and retain highly qualified employees in a competitive hiring market.

## Common goals

Thomas Höhndorf, Area Sales Manager at Bühler, was involved in this project from the first meeting to the start-up of the plant in 2020. He underlines Berte Qvarn's drive for innovation and commitment to highest quality as key factors for the success of the project.

"From day one, we knew we had a tight schedule. But thanks to our long-standing relationship in wheat milling and Berte Qvarn's trust in our solutions for oat processing, we pulled in the same direction from the go with the clear goal to deliver the best possible product to Oatly."

Bühler supplied Berte Qvarn with the full value chain from intake to cleaning, dehulling, and kilning. "The latest generation of optical sorters ensures highest food safety by reducing cross-contamination from other grain varieties, discoloration, subtle spots, and various foreign material," Höhndorf adds.

It is after the kilning process that the oats are transported in the eye-catching yellow Berte Qvarn trucks to Oatly in Malmö, where the finishing touches will be applied to produce the world-renowned oat milk.

## Harnessing untapped potential

Every miller around the world knows that there's always potential for increasing efficiency and output even at the best run mills. Magnus Lindblom is convinced that continuous training and customer service worthy of this modern plant are essential to reaching the next level. "State-of-the-art equipment requires a state-

of-the-art service agreement. Bühler's continuous support and the regular training we receive are indispensable to getting the most out of our facility."

Digitalisation has long made its way into the milling industry, and Lindblom and his team are ready to embrace the opportunities it offers. "We're now looking into the many possibilities of Bühler's cloud platform Bühler Insights. Our goal is to collect even more data from our processes and turn these insights into actions to increase our output and reduce food loss.

"At the end of the day, we have a responsibility as food processors to use our planet's resources as efficiently as possible and create sustainable food value chains for future generations," he says as he heads into the mill to collect a sample for quality check. After all, a miller's experience will always be a key asset in successfully running a mill.

## Continuing the success story

With such a rich history, a drive for creating more sustainable value chains from the soil to the shelf, and a genuine appreciation of their employees, the question is where will the road take Berte Qvarn next? For Helena Stenström, oats will continue its victory march, and rightly so. "Here in Scandinavia, oats are found everywhere, it's natural to use oat-based cosmetics for example. We see that people around the world have become more aware of what they consume and put a strong focus on regional, sustainable products that add health benefits.

"That's why we're prepared to increase our output and do our part to facilitate the comeback of oats to supermarket shelves around the world."