



Meiny Prins, CEO of Priva:

'The future will be better'

"Priva's consistent objective is to generate better returns for our customers with less use of natural resources. We supply smart control technology that greatly reduces the volume of energy needed to heat and cool buildings as well as technology to regulate the correct amount of water and nutrients for plants in greenhouses and so increase yields with less use of natural resources. Ninety percent of the water used in the greenhouse horticulture sector is already recycled. We are also developing new, integrated solutions for a climate-neutral society, such as the implementation of smart grids and the recycling of wastewater for food production.

I am convinced that the Netherlands can play an important role in solving the major problems in the domains of climate, water, food and mobility. In 2014, I launched a website devoted to the Sustainable Urban Delta, with examples of integrated solutions.

There are many innovative forces at work in the Netherlands and there are huge opportunities for Dutch companies around the world, but we need a joint vision of the future if we are going to seize them.

Priva wants to help bring about these new developments and so help to achieve the SDGs. We do business in more than 100 countries and have sixteen branches in Western Europe, China, California, North America and Canada. We bring food production, working and living together in a smart environment."

The change is continuing

"The technical possibilities that already exist and will be further developed in the coming years could save the world. A future without fossil fuels is entirely feasible. With smart use of data analysis and automation we can certainly halve energy consumption. And for the half that remains we can use renewable, locally generated energy.

But this means that we have to connect worlds in a circular economy. Many problems could be resolved by breaking cities and regions up into smaller self-sufficient units.

The problem is that a movement in that direction is being delayed by persistently keeping old systems and interests intact. The fossil-fuel industry is still receiving billions in subsidies, for example. And with EU farm subsidies we are keeping alive a system that allows land in Europe to lie fallow

The Netherlands can play an important role in solving the major problems in the domains of climate, water, food and mobility

while rainforests in Brazil are being felled to grow soya beans to feed pigs and cows in Europe.

But changes are occurring faster than we think. Old systems will inevitably be dismantled. That also explains the turmoil we are seeing in many countries at the moment. Some people are clinging desperately to the old ways, but the movements that have started cannot be halted."

Trump will not stop the cities

"Looking around, I see three trends. The first is that anything that stops adding value ceases to exist. Banks, oil companies and family doctors, for example. The technology is making a lot of jobs redundant.

The second trend is that large cities are becoming the drivers of sustainability. President Trump will not stop cities like San Francisco and New York by withdrawing from the Paris climate agreement. They will draw up their own plans. And the same applies for all of the world's metropolises. Take a city

Business and politics badly need each other to accelerate the positive momentum

like Shanghai with 27 million residents, situated in the Yangtze River delta with a population of 65 million. A megacity like this has to find ways of guaranteeing an adequate supply of food, water and energy, as well as mobility and a green living environment.

Cities like San Francisco and New York will not be stopped by President Trump

The third trend is that technological breakthroughs will turn the world on its head over the next ten years. Think of the advances in digitisation, robotics, nanotechnology, Big Data and the Internet of Things. Everything is linked to everything else, knowledge is at our fingertips, everything is far easier to control.

The next decade will be a difficult and uncertain period, but it is as clear as day that the future will be better. It makes me jealous of today's younger generation. Jobs will disappear because of the new technology, but they will certainly be replaced by new jobs.

The government has the final say on policies on energy, water and food supply, but is unfortunately often behind the times. Look at the procurement procedures in the public sector. They are still too often based solely on price rather than on the total cost of ownership. It will take time and money to create room for change, but the returns will be greater than the investment."

Priva

Priva develops and supplies products and services for sustainable and innovative climate control and process management in the horticulture, utilities and industrial sectors worldwide. The family-owned company in the Westland region endeavours to use scarce natural resources, such as water and energy, as efficiently as possible. In 2009, the Dutch branch of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) awarded the CleanTechStar Award to Priva. Priva has 450 employees.