



Interview by Peter Edwards, *Global Cement Magazine*

# THE NEW LOESCHE

Rüdiger Zerbe, CEO of Loesche, discusses the company's past, present and future in a rare interview...

**Global Cement (GC): Please can you introduce Loesche to our readers?**

**Rüdiger Zerbe (RZ):** Loesche was established in 1906, so we have been in business for 120 years. It started with Curt von Grueber, who obtained the European sales rights for the new US-designed Kent mill. Small by today's standards at 5t/hr, it was a big deal at the time. Von Grueber later took on the rights to the Maxecon mill, which included a classifier.

Ernst Curt Loesche joined the company in 1912 and became sole owner when von Grueber left in the mid 1920s. The first Loesche-branded mill was launched in 1927. At the same time, Loesche grew internationally by exporting complete cement plants with vertical kilns to Asia and South America.

Ernst Guenter Loesche, the second-generation owner, introduced the first VRM for raw meal in the 1960s. At this time, mill manufacturers were under pressure from rapidly-expanding pyroprocessing lines. Loesche responded by producing the first four-roller mill in 1971, with a capacity of more than 200t/hr, later expanding to 400t/hr in 1975.

In 1984, Dr Thomas Loesche became the third generation business leader. At this time, Loesche set another record, with a 750t/hr raw meal VRM for a cement client in Thailand.

In 1993 Loesche started to sell the first slag and cement mills based on its patented design. In 1999, volcanic ash was used as a supplementary cementations material (SCM) at a Peruvian cement plant, reducing the clinker content to 50%. Loesche has since developed the LM 69.6 with raw meal throughputs of up to 1200t/hr, selling 14 around the world. Now, in 2026, the company has more than 800 employees all around the world. It had a 50% market share for grinding in the cement sector in 2024.

**GC: What is the company's mission?**

**RZ:** I spoke with Thomas Loesche about this recently. He said, without hesitation, that Loesche's mission is to develop technologies that support key industries to be sustainable. This translates to sustainability in energy use and resource use. By extension, our products help reduce emissions, while saving money.



Mill maintenance with mobile crane

Rüdiger Zerbe joined Loesche GmbH as Group Managing Director and CEO in 2015, where he works closely alongside the third-generation owner Thomas Loesche. Before joining the company, Zerbe spent 22 years in the steel equipment sector, many of them with SMS Group. A mechanical engineer by training, Zerbe is an expert in process technology and global plant building, with a Masters from the University of Kaiserslautern, Germany.



**GC: How does Loesche carry out this mission?**

**RZ:** While our ‘DNA’ is grinding, we have, over the past 10-15 years, begun to consider how this area affects other parts of the plant. What do the quarry, pyroprocess and despatch sections need from the grinding sections? We have invested heavily in research and development to answer this question.

In 2009 Loesche sold three complete cement lines in Brazil, which are still the biggest in South America. We are happy that we could acquire the Austrian pyroprocessing expert A TEC in 2012. We also invested in cement process modelling and AI expert aixprocess, based in Germany, in the same year. We added bulk handling solutions manufacturer MHC Industries in 2017 and plant management platform developer kingsblue in 2020, both from Germany. This was followed by the Brazilian alternative fuel (pyro)processing expert Dynamis in 2022, India’s Imco Composites in 2022 and large cylinder supplier Ruhfus in 2023. There are regional subsidiaries too, including in key cement markets like China, India, the US and Europe.

Each of our 19 group companies is responsible for its own operations because we believe in an entrepreneurial culture. Each knows its own field

intimately, but they share the same values and, of course, work together for the benefit of our clients.

Most recently, we entered into a partnership with the mining equipment company Metso. It already offers a full range of equipment and services for mining companies, from comminution to flotation and services. They needed a partner with expertise in dry grinding. Mining is a huge untapped sector for Loesche and one that will become ever more important over the rest of the 21st Century.

**GC: What about new technologies developed by Loesche?**

**RZ:** Of course, we continue to develop our core competency of grinding. Most recently we have been doing so via our GreenKey Solutions, each of which looks to develop a different area of sustainability. C/Clay, S/Crete, E/Slag and U/Fines are in the area of SCMs. Each of these aims to reduce the clinker factor – and hence CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – of cement products. This is increasingly important given that fly ash and slag are expected to become more scarce.

C/Clay looks at how Loesche’s technology can be used to facilitate the development of LC3 cements containing clinker, limestone and calcined clay. It



Loesche's GreenKey Solutions.

Thomas Loesche (right) and his sons Alexander (left) and Constantin (centre).

which is looking at how Loesche's technologies will interact with CO<sub>2</sub> capture solutions, particularly on the pyroprocessing side but also in the grinding of fuels, for example in the A TEC Rocket Mill® for AF. C/Guard is still in its early days, but it will be crucial to help fit our existing solutions to future technologies like syngas, oxyfuel burners, hydrogen and more.

**GC: What is behind Loesche's diversification drive?**

draws on elements of our grinding and pyroprocess expertise. Dynamis, with calcined clay references worldwide, is heavily involved in this area of research alongside a new Loesche clay testing facility at the IAB institute in Weimar, Germany. There are numerous technologies being developed for calcined clays.

S/Crete looks at how recycled concrete can be processed and used as an SCM. E/Slag looks at efficient grinding of slags. U/Fine looks at how each of these new SCMs could benefit from grinding to higher-than-usual fineness levels. This is a very exciting area of research for the company.

Away from SCMs, another huge area is alternative fuels, which is addressed under the A/Fuel GreenKey Solutions banner and handled by A TEC. We also launched our D-Gasifier, a biomass gasifier in 2025. We're not shying away from new areas.

We also have the C/Guard GreenKey Solution,

**RZ:** Loesche is responding to the needs of the global cement market. It is calling for better integration within its process so that it can meet its sustainability goals. The cost of emitting CO<sub>2</sub> is already a reality in Europe and some other markets. Costs will only rise and come to new markets in the future. It is in the industry's interest – and Loesche's interest – to develop new solutions now so that the challenge can be met.

**GC: How important are the different areas of the business?**

**RZ:** Loesche has a turnover of around €350m. Around 40% is from grinding equipment sales, with the rest from new process technologies and from servicing.

**GC: How else is the company changing?**

**RZ:** Thomas Loesche has now been the 'anchorman' of the company for more than 40 years, so he is bringing in the fourth generation to the company: his sons Alexander and Constantin. Alexander is Chair of Loesche India and Constantin is involved in strategic projects. They have a bright future with the company - and the company has a bright future with them taking a greater role.

**GC: How does Loesche use AI?**

**RZ:** There are several options. We could look to automate and streamline some repetitive functions, for example in accounting and human resources. There are also great opportunities in supply chain management, which is increasingly challenging at present due to the ongoing conflicts and geopolitical issues. Many companies are doing these kinds of things, regardless of their main business.

For Loesche's business, the main use of AI is found in aixprocess, which is developing AI to improve pyroprocess efficiency. It is looking, for





example, to use visual AI to monitor and optimise flame shapes when burning AF. Looking at our core competency of grinding, we are developing our Dynamic Assistant to facilitate a constant increase in operation efficiency.

More broadly, I would say that we know that AI will impact the way the world does business and how the cement industry operates. However, it is unclear which areas will be most affected and how large the impact will be. There are 5-10 applications that Loesche might be able to use AI for, but there's limited clarity as to whether the capabilities being discussed will be realised. Loesche is very keen, however, to leverage these new technologies and continue to set new trends.

**GC: You just mentioned wars and geopolitical issues. How are these affecting Loesche's activities?**

**RZ:** There are two issues. One is the US tariffs. These affected our business, especially at first, but we have adjusted our supply chains to accommodate this new reality. The more concerning issue is the proliferation of conflict, particularly the complicated conflict between the US, Israel and Iran. Loesche has a lot of contracts in the Middle East and it is currently unclear if these will be affected, to what extent, and for how long. At the moment, things are stable enough to continue in most cases, but the situation remains uncertain.

**GC: How can Loesche maintain its competitive edge in the face of new suppliers to the industry?**

**RZ:** Over the past 20 years, Loesche has worked

closely with the large Chinese cement plant manufacturers to develop long-term partnerships. This has served both parties well, as we can jointly deliver well-priced cement production lines, with high-quality critical components from Loesche.

Nowadays, the Chinese suppliers are entering into the mill space to a greater extent, while Loesche is also expanding. In the face of this, Loesche must continue to improve its solutions so that we can maintain our technical advantage. We must also ensure that we can deliver solutions in a timely manner. Sourcing is very important.

**GC: What else could threaten Loesche's continued success?**

**RZ:** We have seen ups and downs in global markets since the beginning of our business 120 years ago. Aside from unpredictable geopolitics, we may struggle in project funding via export funding. In many cases, particularly in developing markets, there's state funding to subsidise new projects overseas. It can be extremely challenging for European suppliers to compete in such cases, as we can currently see from the decline of some major European plant building companies. Fortunately we, as Loesche, are financially very sound.

**GC: What are Loesche's biggest advantages in the face of these challenges?**

**RZ:** The biggest advantage for Loesche is that it is a long-standing family-owned company. It is large enough to weather storms like Covid-19, but is small enough to respond flexibly as new challenges arise. Key decisions are taken quickly by a small team that is passionate about the company.

They rely on our biggest advantage - our 800 colleagues around the world. The company's hierarchy is not a pyramid. It is very flat. We encourage all businesses, departments and individuals to think for themselves and bring their best, whatever their specialism. This allows people to thrive in the company - and directly impacts our performance, both for our clients and for the bottom line.

Finally, we are stepping up our engagement with the industry, including via interviews like this, to show that we are no longer just a grinding expert. Loesche is a sustainable process technology expert with expertise in the technologies that will transform the cement industry in the coming decades.

**GC: Thank you for your time today Mr Zerbe.**

**RZ:** Thank you - It was great to take part in this first interview with *Global Cement!*

A Loesche flash calciner for day at the IAB in Weimar.

