

Joost Gietelink,
“The current economic situation
offers great potential”



With its own network of quality growers of flowers and plants around the globe, and supply chains extending worldwide, the family-owned Dutch Flower Group (DFG) operates in a highly dynamic environment where adaptability is key. Joost Gietelink, the CFO of DFG, plays a crucial role - not just in financial oversight, but in shaping the organisation's financial leadership, ensuring strategic alignment, and preparing for the future. Regardless of the economic outlook. “There will always be challenges, but because of how our company is positioned, we can focus on opportunities.”

Economic recession as an opportunity

According to the results of the CFO Survey Spring 2025, the general prognosis among Dutch CFOs is that an economic recession will occur, based

and insecurity you can make a difference, especially when your company is customer-driven. Consumers tend to be thrifty in a crisis, but no matter how bad the outlook, they will always want to decorate their homes with

“Many mid-market companies are reaching the conclusion that they need to be part of a larger company such as DFG to remain successful.”

on the economic outlook and geopolitical risks. However, Joost Gietelink remains remarkably optimistic. Even though he recognizes the probability of a recession, he does not seem overly concerned about its impact. Gietelink: “The current situation also offers great potential. In times of adversity

flowers and plants.” Another important reason why Gietelink is optimistic, is the diversification within his company. DFG has evolved from a trading business into a diversified international company in floral wholesale, retail, and large-scale production. Production is spread across

Joost Gietelink (CFO Dutch Flower Group since June 2022) is a strong strategic CFO with international commercial and financial services experience, and a proven track record delivering results. He is an independent, pragmatic and impactful thinker who has transformed and developed broad-scoped finance leadership teams, developed strategies in different countries from turn-around to further transforming, initiated and executed acquisitions and divestments in several regions, and successfully initiated, integrated and ran large shared service centres. Gietelink graduated from Utrecht University and TIAS School for Business and Society and worked in CFO roles for a variety of companies, including Enza Zaden and Randstad UK & Middle East.

multiple continents, minimising risk from regional disruptions and ensuring proximity to the market everywhere. When asked about the impact of tariffs, he explains that the US and China

are not the company's main markets. And last but not least, there is great potential in the field of mergers and acquisitions (M&A). Gietelink: "Many mid-market companies are reaching the conclusion that they need to be part of a larger company such as DFG to remain successful."

Frontrunner in sustainability

The focus on opportunities rather than challenges is also reflected in the company's view on sustainability, which has long been embedded in the corporate vision. Since 2012, the company has prioritised environmental and social responsibility, well before regulations required formal reporting. While new mandates have been delayed (CSRD) - pushing compliance from 2025 to 2027 - DFG has chosen to move forward regardless. "We want to be a frontrunner, we're intrinsically driven to be more sustainable. We believe that together, we can create a happier and greener world, which is reflected in our mission: Making Life Colourful." For Gietelink, sustainability reporting is far from an obligation. Reliable data,

"We want to be a frontrunner in sustainability, we're intrinsically driven to be more sustainable."

auditable metrics, and strategic goal-setting enable the company to make the shift. Finance should be in the lead, as a department that is experienced in auditability. Of course, cultural challenges remain. Some employees embrace sustainability

wholeheartedly, while others question its relevance. Change doesn't happen overnight - it requires ongoing dialogue, engagement, and education to ensure broad organisational commitment.

The role of the CFO

Which brings us to Gietelink's view on the role of the CFO.

"Being a good employer is part of our ESG strategy, IMPACT2030. The social component of ESG is just as important as the environmental one."

Across industries, the role of the CFO is evolving. Financial accuracy remains essential - "There mustn't be any surprises, neither positive nor negative" - but leadership is increasingly focused on people. Gietelink: "How do you build trust? How do you inspire teams to embrace new strategies? For me, and for other CFOs I have discussed this topic with, our role is very much about developing Finance people to be strong business partners. Leadership isn't just about financial oversight - it's about coaching, mentoring, and ensuring that employees take ownership of their roles. I'm sure

that everyone comes to work with good intentions, but the results need to be satisfactory as well." He explains that the strongest organisations are those where teams operate independently, solving problems without constant oversight. The ability

to step back and watch a well-trained team work seamlessly is the true sign of success. Which is why the HR strategy 'Passion for People' is pivotal within DFG's six key strategic drivers. "We want to be a good place to work, where we handle most issues bottom-up. In fact, being a good employer is part of our ESG strategy, IMPACT2030, as

well. The social component of ESG is just as important as the environmental one."

From risk management to process optimisation

Of course, in order to focus on potential and success, risk management is a no-brainer. However, with diversification being so eminent within DFG, some risks are actually already being managed. Maybe that is why Gietelink feels so much at ease when it comes to risk management. "I often wonder why people have such a negative connotation with it. I'd like to think of risk management as process optimisation. It makes our lives easier and our customers happier. For instance, if you optimise the process flow with PO numbers, your sales people can focus on what they do best - sales, instead of reminding customers to pay their bills."

Digital transformation: the human challenge

Speaking of optimisation,

technology plays an increasingly vital role in the future of DFG, with AI, ERP systems, and automation reshaping operations. Yet, despite the promise of innovation, digital

“Leadership isn’t just about financial oversight - it’s about coaching, mentoring, and ensuring employees take ownership of their roles.”

transformation presents challenges - not technical ones, but human ones. “Moving to a modern ERP system, for instance, requires fundamental shifts in thinking. While I focus on scalable solutions and long-term efficiency, our people might struggle to embrace unfamiliar workflows. Managing this transition is as much about culture as it is about technology.” Therefore, digital projects require careful implementation, balancing the need for innovation with the reality of human behaviour.

Lessons from crisis: COVID-19 and preparedness

Despite the general sense of optimism, one thing deeply worries Gietelink. His concern reflects a broader lesson learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many businesses knew a global epidemic was possible, yet few

prepared for its full impact. The same could be said for shifting political landscapes. “I’m shocked that I did not see this coming, even though there were red flags. Although our operating markets

are primarily European, our data and technology are largely dependent on US companies, and some of our trusted business partners are American banks. No immediate action is required, but much more often than before, this is a topic for internal discussion. We need to anticipate financial, operational, and geopolitical shifts before they

“We need to anticipate financial, operational, and geopolitical shifts before they become immediate threats.”

become immediate threats.”

Finding opportunity in uncertainty

However, optimism prevails. Market fluctuations will happen, political shifts will influence trade, and emerging risks will continue to challenge industries. But with a strong foundation - built on diversification, (Finance) talent development, and strategic

foresight - the company is positioned not just to withstand change, but to thrive within it. By focusing on leadership, continuous improvement, and responsible growth, DFG is turning potential challenges into strategic advantages. And in a world where uncertainty is inevitable, that is what sets market leaders apart.

Summary (SEO optimised)

Joost Gietelink, CFO at Dutch Flower Group (DFG), considers the current economic climate as an opportunity. His company is customer-driven, diversified, and focused on people and continuous improvement. Sustainability has long been embedded in the corporate

vision. Reliable data, auditable metrics, and strategic goal-setting are key. Gietelink believes that the role of the CFO is very much about developing Finance people to be strong business partners. Risk management is a no-brainer and regarded as process optimisation. Managing the digital transformation of a company is as much about culture as it is about technology.