



A short history

When Leo Leander Bekaert started making barbed wire in 1880, what he did was not so very unique, but how he did it and where he did it were. The prevailing industrial philosophy of the time required finished products to be manufactured as close as possible to the source of the raw materials. Leo Bekaert, however, manufactured his product as close as possible to his market. He was selling to farmers, so he made his barbed wire where the farmers were.

And he very rapidly diversified: from barbed wire he went to bedsprings, wire netting, steel wire, and nails. Thus, he set a pattern of pragmatism, realism, and adaptability that has served Bekaert well throughout our turbulent century.

World War I marked the end of the First Industrial Revolution and the society it

supported. It also forced fundamental changes in Leo Bekaert's company, for the Bekaert plant – along with most of Belgium – was devastated.

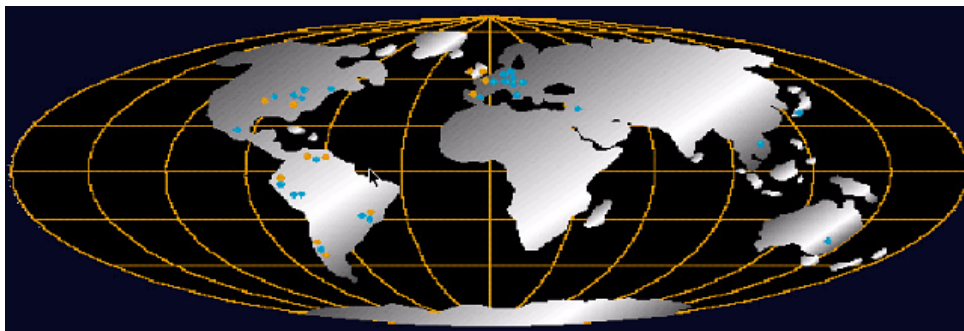
Only a few of the machines could be recovered, but Leo Bekaert's primary assets were intact: his own entrepreneurial drive and his extraordinarily loyal staff.

When Leo Bekaert entrusted the daily operation of the company to his sons in 1920, a new economic, political, and social era had dawned. And they adapted. The impending economic crisis and rampant protectionism made international expansion necessary for survival, and technological advances led to the conversion from steam to electrical power, which ushered in the Second Industrial Revolution.

Bekaert in a nutshell

Number of factories	61
Number of countries	20
Number of sales offices/distribution centers	45
Turnover – 1995 (BEF billion)	89.8
Volume – 1995 (000 tonnes)	1,796
Number of people – 1995	17,677
Principal shareholder	Bekaert Family

Bekaert in the World



Number of plants	Europe	North America	Latin America	Middle/Far East	Total
End 1985	29	2	7	2	40
End 1995	36	7	14	4	61

Personnel	Europe	North America	Latin America	Middle/Far East	Total
End 1985	12 850	901	2 178	835	16 764
End 1995	10 097	1 491	4 448	1 641	17 677