

KORMOTECH'S POLISH PIVOT:

TO SAFEGUARD SUPPLY CHAINS AMID WAR, KORMOTECH OPENED A POLISH LOGISTICS HUB, BOOSTING RELIABILITY, EXPANDING EU REACH, AND ADAPTING TO COMPETITIVE MARKETS THROUGH STRATEGIC BRANDING, E-COMMERCE GROWTH, AND LONG-TERM GLOBAL EXPANSION GOALS.

BY SEAN REYNAUD



WBJ: What motivated Kormotech to open a logistics center and a company in Poland, and how has this impacted operations in the region?

Rostyslaw Vovk: At Kormotech, we are committed to ensuring that all our partners receive products on time and with an adequate shelf life—a standard we consistently maintain.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia created significant logistical challenges. Border delays, port closures, and the mobilization of some drivers disrupted our supply chain. To safeguard our supply chain and ensure uninterrupted deliveries across

Europe and beyond, we established Kormotech Global in Poland—a company responsible for all our international sales outside Ukraine. Our logistics hub in Krakow enables us to maintain a two-month inventory buffer, minimize war-related risks, and ensure our partners have reliable access to our products.

Krakow is strategically located near our production facilities—just over 300 kilometers from Lviv Oblast, around 750 kilometers from our third plant in Kedainiai, Lithuania, and about 900 kilometers from the Port of Klaipeda, where products from Thailand arrive. Some of our super-premium Optimeal items are produced there by a partner manufacturer.

Are there advantages to establishing warehouses in Poland, and does this support expansion within the EU?

With a logistics center in Krakow, we're closer to our partners in Central and Eastern Europe. The warehouse in Poland makes our supply chain faster and more reliable, ensuring that our products are consistently available to partners across the EU and beyond. This supports stronger, long-term partnerships, while the strategic location of the facility lowers barriers to entering new markets.

What challenges did Kormotech face when entering the Polish market and

the EU more broadly, and how were they overcome?

Each European market comes with its own unique characteristics. Adapting to the legal and regulatory framework was relatively smooth for us, as we aligned with European standards from the very beginning when building our production facilities in Ukraine.

However, understanding consumer expectations and identifying the most effective distribution model proved more challenging. These aspects required deeper market insights and strategic adjustments to meet local demands effectively.

Over a decade ago, we began expanding into EU markets with three brands, each targeting a specific segment: My Love for the standard segment, Club 4 Paws for the premium, and Optimeal for the super-premium category. However, we soon realized that Optimeal wasn't competitive enough in its segment. We faced a choice: lower the price and reposition it in a lower tier or completely revamp the brand.

We chose the latter—reformulating the recipes and redesigning the brand while keeping only the original name. This fall, we're relaunching Optimeal once again, as consumer expectations continue to evolve.

When it comes to the Polish market, it's both the largest among Ukraine's neighboring countries and one of the most challenging. It's highly competitive, with consumers who are very price-conscious and tend to look for promotions that balance between quality and affordability.

We initially focused on independent pet stores but quickly faced intense competition from major players. This required increased investment in trade marketing and the development of new sales channels. However, traditional pet retail is a relatively small segment, as most of the market is dominated by online platforms, supermarkets, and pet store chains. As a result, we're currently optimizing our distribution structure to adapt.

Despite the challenges, we've made significant progress. We started with just one truckload of products every six months, and now we're moving 100–120 tons per month.

Does Kormotech plan to invest further in production or R&D facilities in Poland in the coming years?

Our goal is to become one of the world's

top 30 pet food manufacturers by 2028 and grow our global sales and revenue to €500 million. In Ukraine, where we are the market leader, we intend to defend our position, while internationally we aim to aggressively expand our market share.

Achieving this will require scaling up our production capacity. We're currently building a second wet food plant in Lithuania and actively exploring opportunities to establish additional facilities elsewhere in Europe—and possibly in Ukraine as well.

How has Kormotech adapted to Polish consumers and retailers? Are there any marketing strategies the company approaches differently in Poland?

One key characteristic of the Polish market that we've experienced firsthand is the strong and rapidly growing share of e-commerce, which is among the fastest-developing segments in Europe. That's why we've shifted our focus in Poland toward expanding the presence of Kormotech brands on major marketplaces such as Allegro, Empik, and Erli.

This strategy is already showing results: over the past three months (March-May), online sales of our products by distribution partners have increased from 10% to 25%. In line with this shift, we've intensified our digital marketing efforts. While our Ukrainian team develops the creative materials, a local expert from our international team handles promotional activities on Polish e-commerce platforms.



ABOUT ROSTYSLAV VOVK

Rostyslav Vovk co-founded Kormotech with his father and sister in 2003 and has led the company as CEO for 12 years. Under his leadership, Kormotech entered the world's top 50 pet food manufacturers, reached \$162.7 million in annual turnover, and expanded to 51 markets. The family-owned company, with Ukrainian roots, produces premium and super-premium cat and dog food under brands including Optimeal, Delicicious, Club 4 Paws, Hav!, Miau!, and My Love, operating three production facilities in Ukraine and Lithuania. In 2023, Rostyslav launched Kormotech Ventures to support pet care startups and, since 2024, has chaired the company's Supervisory Board.

He is a regular speaker at major international forums, including EEC 2025 in Katowice, Forbes CEE Forum 2024 in Bucharest, the Foreign Investors Annual Summit 2024 in Vilnius, and the Rebuild Ukraine Business Conference 2024 in Toronto.