Overview
Based in Ghent, Belgium, FARYS distributes drinking water to some 700,000 household, business and industry customers. It also provides a wide array of management, engineering and operating services to municipalities and other public operators in the areas of public sewerage systems and of public sports facilities.

Challenge
To succeed in an increasingly stringent regulatory environment, water utilities must use their data more effectively than ever. However, as the volume, speed and diversity of data grow, delivering these capabilities to the business can be a tough challenge.

This was the situation facing FARYS. Like many utilities, the company relies on SAP ERP applications to integrate its operations and support strategic decision making.

Jeroen Van Praet, Coordinator Infrastructure Operations at FARYS, says: “In the past, we used SAP BusinessObjects solutions connected to Microsoft SQL Server databases to deliver analytics services. Our workloads are becoming more complex and data-intensive all the time, and we realized that we needed to improve the performance of our platform dramatically.

“To solve the challenge, we decided to move to an in-memory database based on SAP HANA and we looked for a robust server platform to support the new solution.”

Solution
FARYS selected SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications as the foundation for its SAP HANA platform.

“We chose SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications because it’s the platform SAP uses to develop SAP HANA,” says Van Praet. “The close technical relationship between the two companies reduces the risk of stability problems when we deploy updates.”

To deliver the necessary compute, storage and networking performance for SAP HANA, FARYS worked with HPE.

“We had demanding use cases for our new analytics platform, such as querying all data from a 24-hour period,” said Van Praet. “To deliver the performance needed, while keeping costs in check, we wanted to design the infrastructure ourselves.

FARYS
FARYS is highly dependent on its data to deliver efficient and cost-effective services. With the complexity of its analytics workloads increasing all the time, the company decided to embrace an in-memory solution based on SAP HANA running on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications, resulting in a 98 percent reduction in query times for faster, better informed decision making.

Success Story
SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications
SUSE Linux Enterprise High Availability Extension
SUSE Manager

FARYS at a Glance:
Headquartered in Ghent, Belgium, FARYS provides drinking water to end users in a large part of Flanders. The public sector firm also operates local sewerage networks and manages a number of sports facilities.

Industry and Location
Utilities, Flanders, Belgium

Products and Services
SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications
SUSE Linux Enterprise High Availability Extension
SUSE Manager

Results
+ Automates patching and provisioning, freeing IT assets to focus on value-adding tasks
+ Saves up to €95,000 on high-availability capabilities by avoiding the need for a third-party solution
+ Cuts query times by 98 percent, supporting deeper analytics and better informed decision making

“We chose SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications because it’s the platform SAP uses to develop SAP HANA.”

JEROEN VAN PRAET
Coordinator Infrastructure Operations
FARYS
Thanks to the SAP Tailored Datacenter Integration [TDI] program, we were free to choose our own hardware and, after running scripts to certify the environment, we qualified for SAP support.

FARYS deployed HPE blades and rack servers, virtualized with VMware ESXi and connected to a HPE tier-1 rack storage array. FARYS set up its SAP HANA database servers on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server instances clustered using the SUSE Linux Enterprise High Availability Extension. The approximately 250 SAP application servers remain on Microsoft Windows, virtualized on 14 VMware hosts.

“Our work with SUSE was our first experience with Linux as an organization, but the documentation on the SUSE website and the assistance we received from the user community and our business partner Kangaroot were outstanding,” says Van Praet. “By learning from the experts as we went, we rapidly built the necessary skills to manage the platform effectively.”

“Another benefit of the SAP-specific SUSE solution is that it includes SUSE Linux Enterprise High Availability Extension at no additional cost. We can fail over in a single click; saving time and effort and reducing the risk of extended downtime in a recovery scenario.”

To automate essential maintenance tasks, FARYS uses SUSE Manager.

“SUSE Manager enables us to push out patches and stage and install new servers using pre-configured templates, which frees us to focus on value-adding tasks” says Van Praet. “And if we suspect that an application update may break something—and providing there have been no major security releases in the interim—we can lock in the last stable version of the package and avoid updates.”

Results
With SAP HANA on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications driving its analytics processes, FARYS delivers the performance the business requires to make data-driven decisions.

“We’ve cut query times in our SAP BusinessObjects platform from an average of 24 hours to less than 20 minutes,” says Van Praet. “If one of our analysts wants to make a new cube, they can build it over lunch instead of starting it the day before; opening the door to faster and more complex analytics.”

The SUSE solution also enabled FARYS to achieve substantial capital cost savings.

“If we had chosen to deploy our previous high-availability platform for the new SAP HANA environment, it would have cost us around €100,000 in software licences,” concludes Van Praet. “By selecting the SUSE Linux Enterprise High Availability Extension, our only expense was three days of consulting time during the deployment, saving us €95,000. Overall, we couldn’t be happier with the SUSE solution.”