

The French agri-food industry: A sector of excellence

A solid industrial base
France's expertise in the agri-food sector is renowned and sought after by manufacturers worldwide; those already established in France enjoy a significant competitive advantage from

their location, drawing notably on a qualified, flexible and highly productive workforce. The agri-food industry is the biggest business sector in France, with a turnover of •180 billion in 2010 and annual

growth of 5 to 7%. Ranked 2nd in Europe and 3rd in the world, it employs 400,000 people in over 10,200 companies. The French agri-food sector exports •35 billion worth of processed products, helping it to gen-

erate a surplus trade balance.

Market leaders

The sector comprises a large number of SMEs (97% of the sector) located throughout the country, alongside several major French groups which are international leaders in their respective markets: Danone (ranked 1st in the world for fresh dairy products and 2nd for bottled water and children's food), Lactalis (1st in the world for dairy products), Bongrain (1st in the world for cheese-based specialties), LVMH (wines and spirits), Bel (1st in Europe for processed cheese) and Pernod Ricard (2nd in the world for wines and spirits). Thanks to this well-established industry, France accounts for around 8% of all international food product sales.

A firm focus on R&D

The French agri-food indus-

try operates in an environment which fosters innovation transfer and benefits from the savoir-faire of 10,000 highly-skilled engineers, researchers and technicians, with an R&D budget of around •1.5 billion.

Agri-food research is conducted in partnership with several organizations, and draws upon public-sector research of a very high standard. In addition to the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA), several other organizations work on food-related topics: the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), the French Food Safety Agency (AFSSA), the Agricultural and Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CEMAGREF), the French Marine Research Institute (IFREMER), the Agricultural Research Center for

International Development (CIRAD), the Research Institute for Development (IRD) and several universities and schools.

The main interface between public-sector research and industry is provided by a network of technical centers led by the

French Association for Technical Coordination in the Agri-Food Industry (ACTIA), and by nine specialist innovation clusters.



Packaging of Roquefort cheese

Festivals - a French speciality

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best actor and best foreign film too. It set the seal on his international reputation.

Another annual get-together is the Avignon Festival in July. This event has been the undisputed high-point of international French-language theatre for 65 years. The official Festival puts on 35 to 40 performances in some 20 venues, usually historic buildings and outdoors, and 3,000 live theatre professionals are performed as part of its fringe, the Festival "Off". Large numbers of people from all walks of life throng the town, filling theatre venues, but also schoolyards and stages improvised in the streets or in the back rooms of cafés.

Ever since the first "Chorégies d'Orange" (1869),

an opera festival that historically sparked off the festival phenomenon, the types of event and their content have changed considerably and today these festivals are so many and various that they are beyond count! Not only is cinema celebrated, but specifically detective films and thrillers (in Cognac), American films (in Deauville), African films (in Amiens) or the festival of "pocket" films taken on miniature cameras or mobile phones (Pocket Films, Paris).

When it comes to music, every style is represented, from classical music to jazz, from song ("Francofolies" at La Rochelle) to opera (Aix-en-Provence). Dance is celebrated in Montpellier, photography is all over the town in Arles while a literary outing

can lead you from the "Paris en Toutes Lettres" festival to the "Quais du polar" festival of crime thrillers in Lyon. In recent years, even civic concerns have come to the fore: for instance, the "Festival de l'Oh!", all about water, in the département of Seine-et-Marne and the ecology film festival in the city of Bourges.

As the vast majority of these festivals rely on the energy and enthusiasm of groups of people wanting to share sincere passions, they defy these difficult economic times. A few days of festivity can breathe a youthful air of conviviality into things and sometimes revive forgotten corners of France... bringing true meaning to France's "exception culturelle" the protection of cultural diversity.

France at a glance

Area	633,000 sq. km (544,000 in metropolitan France and 89,000 in the overseas départements)
Population	65 million
Secularism	The Constitution of 4 October 1958 guarantees freedom of conscience and worship.
Political system	Semi-presidential regime: the President of the Republic, elected for a five-year term, appoints the Prime Minister, who is the head of government. Nicolas Sarkozy was elected on 6 May 2007. Bicameral parliamentary system: Senate (331 senators) and National Assembly (577 deputies).
Administrative divisions	27 regions (22 in metropolitan France and 5 overseas), 100 départements (96 in metropolitan France and 4 overseas) and 36,778 communes .
GDP	€ 1,946 billion (5 th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP)
International trade	5 th rank for exports; 5 th rank for imports. 2/3 of French foreign trade is done with EU countries.
Energy production	575 billion kWh, of which: - 77% nuclear-generated, - 13% renewable energies (hydraulic, wind and photovoltaic), - 10% classical heat-generated.
Tourism	Top tourist destination (80 million foreign visitors per year).

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Our best wishes and Heartiest Felicitations to the Friendly People and the Government of The Republic of **France** on the occasion of their **National Day on 14th July 2011**

ADEX CORPORATION LTD.

Baitul Abed, 3rd floor, 53 Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
Phones : 0088-02-9560626, 9559868, Fax : 0088-02 956 2705,
e-mail : info@adexbd.com, Web: www.adexbd.com