

Fabien Russias, Laïta's new Managing Director A strong dynamic of openness

Fabien Roussias is Laïta's new Managing Director. The 44-year-old taking over the reins of the Grand Ouest dairy cooperative is an engineer by training and has been a member of the executive committee for twelve years. His task is to spearhead the dynamic of 'openness'.

Fabien Russias takes over from Christian Griner as managing director of Laïta

On 1 July Laïta's board of directors appointed Fabien Russias as their Managing Director, following a nomination by Guy Le Bars, President of the Even Cooperative and its subsidiary Laïta. Christian Griner is now free to devote himself fully to the strategy and growth of the Breton Cooperative, having previously headed up Laïta (where he took up the reins in 2016) as well as Even.

Fabien Russias is well-known to the Even Group and is a champion of it. He joined the Group in 2003 as an engineer, after graduating from the Institut National Agronomique de Paris Grignon (National Institute of Agronomy, Paris-Grignon) in 1997 and the l'École Nationale de Génie Rural (National School of Rural Engineering) in 2001. He became a member of Laïta's management committee in 2009, taking on responsibility for logistics, purchasing and sales of dairy ingredients, until his recent appointment as managing director.

An unaltered strategy...

Laïta is moving forward in its drive to tackle the challenges of the current times. The original strategic plan, to which it has adhered since the enterprise was established in 2009*, remains unchanged:

- to add value in a sustainable way to the producers' milk, by constant improvement of the product mix in particular;
- to help revitalise the Grand-Ouest region;
- to respond to the expectations of customers, consumers and civic society.

Laïta currently processes milk from 2,660 farms in the Grand Ouest region, a total of 1.5 billion litres. Laïta has been supporting the development of dairy produce by its producers since 2009. Collection has increased by almost 20% in ten years. The teams have improved their skills and expanded, and currently provide jobs for 3,020 people. At the same time, the organisation has injected close to 500 million euros into the economy of the region, especially in high-tech tools such as the infant formula unit at Créhen, which came into service in 2017, and the brand new line of medical and infant feeding bottles which went into production in 2020 during lockdown (see below).

** Laïta was established in 2009 from a merger of the Even, Terrena and Eureden dairies.*

... at the heart of Laïta's dynamic of openness

After a decade of consolidation and construction, Laïta is now stepping up the pace in its strategic development plan. Securing dairy income for producers means continuing to improve the product mix and its resistance to market volatility, within a dynamic of openness.

To do this, the organisation is increasing its efforts in two key areas:

- developing branded consumer products, in particular Paysan Breton. The objective is an increase from the 36,000 tonnes currently sold in French supermarkets to 40,000 tonnes by 2025. This increase in volume, while meeting public and consumer expectations, must be accompanied by an improvement in value for the producers.
- optimising protein through investments, which should allow an increase in the amount of cheese, premium dairy ingredients and clinical and infant nutrition in France and internationally.

Paysan Breton, growth in the right direction

The teams and producers seem to be off to a good start on the challenge. Paysan Breton is consolidating its growth and consumers are increasingly choosing the target brands from the local region: two values that constitute the brand's DNA. All three product families - butter, soft cheese and fermented milk - are gaining ground. The brand has achieved growth on two levels since 2019: 20% growth in butter, 25% growth in soft cheese with Madame Loïk, and 17% growth in fermented milk; the market share in butter and soft cheese is up by 1.5%. The introduction of Paysan Breton's first cardboard carton last April also represents an important SEO success. All distributor clients have welcomed this innovation, which is in keeping with public expectation and Laïta's Passion du Lait® CSR strategy. Significant advances have been made in restructuring this strategy in recent months, both upstream and downstream.

The more noteworthy advances include:

- setting up the Even CSR-Upstream fund which makes part of the cooperative's return of profits to member producers dependent on sustainable practices: activities that promote the lifestyle of farmers and their employees, animal welfare, a reduction in the farm's carbon footprint, etc.;
- achieving the Scope 3 emissions target followed by establishment of the Laïta energy master plan; the plan's objective is to reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030;
- the launch of the Paysan Breton forum 'Moving forward together for the common good' in early October, to develop the brand's CSR commitments with the consumers, the public and farmer partners (online survey at paysanbreton.com until 30 November).

First external growth to support Laïta's international development

As part of its dynamic of openness, Laïta acquired London-based company Marathon Food Ltd. at the beginning of 2021. This Mediterranean food distribution company is significant for being the exclusive supplier of halloumi, a popular type of cheese in Britain, by Eurilat - a subsidiary of Laïta based in Evercreech in the UK. With the acquisition of Marathon Food, Laïta has secured the supply of halloumi by its British subsidiary and consolidated its future development. At the same time it has expanded the range of cheeses available for its international markets.

A new high-tech line for Laïta Nutrition

As part of its strategy to promote dairy protein, Laïta Nutrition has commissioned a new high-tech line for the production of specialist feeding bottles at the Ploudaniel site (29).

Laïta Nutrition has over 30 years' experience in manufacturing complex nutrition products. This branch of Laïta's business develops specialised nutrition products (clinical, dietetic, infant, nutritional supplements, etc.), ready to consume and with long shelf lives, as part of a B2B activity for international customers and their brands.

In addition to ISO 9001 2015 (quality management) and ISO 22000/FSSC 22000 (food safety) certifications, the Laïta Nutrition site in Ploudaniel is also approved for the export of liquid infant milk to China (GACC - General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China). Laïta products are now distributed to more than 50 countries worldwide. The new production line called in 22 million euros of investment. The installation consists of a sterilisation module, followed by an aseptic packaging unit and an outer-packaging line. Brought into production during lockdown, the new line enabled an increase in production capacity and the addition of two new bottle sizes for complex infant and medical nutrition products - 70ml and 90ml. These new bottles are smaller than the existing options, compact and perfectly suited to Nourette - the liquid infant formula sold in ready-to-use bottles with the appropriate teat, one of Laïta Nutrition's flagship products, distributed to maternity units. The new bottles also open up exciting possibilities for sports nutrition brands and highly-concentrated clinical nutrition products.

What they say

"In passing on the baton, I applaud Fabien's promotion and assure him and all the Laïta teams of my support and my confidence in their ability to continue developing Even's dairy subsidiary project, while observing the Group's values, a shared sense of responsibility, team spirit and simplicity."

Christian Griner, Managing Director of the Even Group

"I would like to thank Christian and Guy for this emphatic vote of confidence. I shall continue to support Laïta's project alongside the teams in a robust dynamic of openness, to the service of milk producers and the development of the Grand Ouest region."

Fabien Russias, Managing Director of Laïta

Press contact: Mathilde ROGER – Press officer RIVACOM

Tel: +33 (0)2 99 79 89 52 - +33 (0)6 89 62 47 67 – Email: mathilde@rivacom.fr

Laïta's identity card

- European dairy cooperative company with a turnover of **1.4 billion euros**, of which 66% in France, 22% in the European Union and 12% in major exports.
- subsidiary of the **Even Group**.
- **2,660** farms in the Grand Ouest region of France.
- **1.5 billion litres** of milk collected.
- **3,020** employees.
- **7** industrial sites.
- **5** European subsidiaries.
- **4** main markets: consumer products, healthcare nutrition, dairy ingredients, feed for young mammals
- customers in more than **110** countries.
- a common commitment to **Passion du Lait®**, **Laïta's CSR strategy**, by employees and producers.
- **Paysan Breton** key figures:
 - . **butter**: Paysan Breton is the 2nd biggest brand in French supermarkets with a 14.2% market share, and the leading source of client growth in 2020 and 2021.
 - . **spreadable cheese**: Madame Loïk is the 4th biggest brand sold in French supermarkets, with a market share of 11.2%.
 - . **fermented milk**: Paysan Breton is the French leader with a 20.2% market share.