

Danone operated two major research centers, the Daniel Carasso Centre outside Paris and the Centre for Specialized Nutrition in the Netherlands. These centers were involved with over 200 scientific partnerships throughout the world. The research efforts of the two corporate research centers were closely linked with R & D activities conducted by four business groups.

Principles and Values

At the core of Danone's management system was a set of principles and values that were first enunciated by Antoine Riboud in 1972. Underlying them was the belief that there could be no sustainable business development without human development.

In 1996, Danone established a working group to identify the central values which Danone represented and aspired to. Three values were identified: Openness, Enthusiasm, and Humanism, to which a fourth, Proximity, was added in 2004. Danone's commitment to these values guided its relationships with its employees, its customers, the communities within which it operated, and the natural environment. In 2008, Franck Riboud reiterated Danone's commitment to social responsibility:

An enterprise exists and lasts only because it creates value for society as a whole . . . The raison d'être of the enterprise lies in its social usefulness. It is to serve society and mankind, in the everyday lives of men and women, through the products, services, employment or even the dividends it provides". In today's economic context, this commitment is more relevant than ever in helping to realise the Danone mission: to bring health through food to as many people as possible.¹⁰

Danone's human resource policies were articulated in a document first published in 1974 and now in its fourth edition. Every Danone business was required to uphold International Labor Organization conventions as well as committing to the development of skills and talents among all employees and to innovation through diversity.

In relation to environmental sustainability, Danone's programs included:

- climate change; in 2009, Danone committed to reducing its output of CO₂ per kilogram of product by 30% by 2012, and its energy consumption by 20%;
- biodiversity: Danone established targets for protecting and restoring biodiversity through its production and sourcing policies.
- protection of water sources;
- redesigning packaging to minimize its environmental impact;
- supporting eco-friendly agriculture.

In 2009, Danone created the Danone Ecosystem Fund with a budget of €100 million to support projects that created sustainable jobs in activities directly related to Danone's activities, particularly in agriculture and distribution. Projects included Proximity, a new distribution service for independent local retailers, and the creation of cooperatives of small milk producers in Ukraine.

Danone's pursuit of social and environment responsibility was not driven only by altruism: Riboud believed that the pursuit of broad social and environmental goals

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