

Vichy Val d'Allier

The network, a new way of working

Innovation – competitiveness – development – cooperation – legibility, are the key words of the challenges we face today and tomorrow. Over the last few years new common development strategies have been put in place across the territory of Vichy Val d'Allier [VVA]. « *Together we are stronger* » is not a maxim traditionally associated with the economic world... And yet, a new way of working is making itself felt: networking.

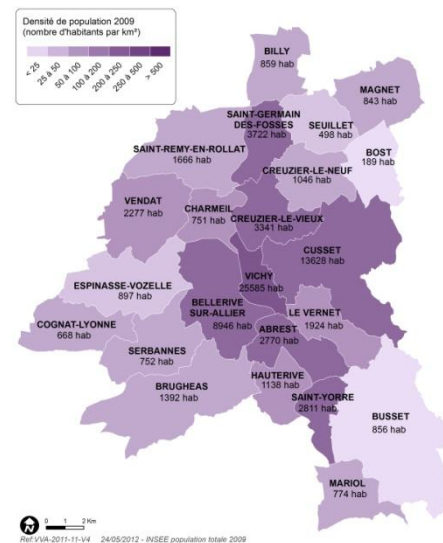
The Vichy Val d'Allier Community of Local Communes

2nd economic basin in the Auvergne, 23 communes, nearly 80,000 inhabitants, geographic area of 320km²: VVA has numerous strengths, advantages and attractions which are continuously being improved.

Mutualising skills and know-how, grouping together to be stronger, are notions that the Communes in France have understood for a long time: with the proof being the Community of Communes. Created in 2011 the VVA Community of Local Communes (CLC) has the principle objective of associating its members « *in a strategy based on solidarity, to create and see through a common project of urban and regional development* ».

VVA has a privileged, central location successfully combined with an excellent quality of life: situated at the crossroads of a motorway network linking Paris to Montpellier, and Bordeaux to Lyons, with Clermont Ferrand's international airport only 45 minutes away. Of the three major residential areas in the Allier, only Vichy has seen its population increase over the last 10 years.

Located at the heart of an employment catchment area of nearly 120,000 inhabitants, VVA has privileged relationships with both the urban Clermont hub, between Clermont-Ferrand and Vichy, and the Rhône Alpes region.



« For more than 10 years VVA's CLC has used its Economic Development service and Development Agency to work alongside companies and entrepreneurs to provide them with business development solutions which not only also benefit the territory but, furthermore, enhance our reputation and attractiveness.

This success is only possible because of the skills synergies between the different local economic development actors. Because we want to increase this type of networking, we have put in place an operational economic partnership convention between VVA CLC, Vichy Val d'Allier Développement [Development Agency], the Comité d'Expansion Economique de l'Allier [Economic Expansion Committee], and the Montluçon-Gannat and Moulins-Vichy Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The convention was signed at the beginning of the summer. It symbolises the increased networking between these institutions, to the benefit and service of companies and entrepreneurs in our different economic basins. It also provides an opportunity to explore new avenues of cooperation, in order to develop and reinforce the fabric of our local economy.



This new and ambitious approach is another example of our commitment to develop the Clermont-Riom-Vichy urban hub. It also helps us mobilise and coordinate our efforts to become stronger and more efficient: ready to face the economic challenges of tomorrow. »

Jean-Michel Guerre
 President of Vichy Val d'Allier Community of Local Communes

The territory opens up

Being part of the major motorway and inter-city rail networks and the completion of the bypass around the greater Vichy area, are fundamental to VVA's development strategy.

These infrastructure services are essential for a balanced economic development throughout the community. Furthermore, they will improve economic competitiveness by addressing the needs and challenges of the economic activity zones in our territory. As part of this programme, the South-West portion of the greater Vichy bypass will connect with the A719 **Motorway link from Gannat to Bellerive**, which should be open in 2015. As far as the **North-West portion** of the ring road around the second largest urban area in the Auvergne is concerned, this section is the final link in the project and has the unanimous support of local government and business. It will also serve the future Montpertuis-Palazol business park. «*It is a major project and very important to the construction of the Clermont-Riom-Vichy urban hub*» emphasised Jean-Michel Guerre, President of VVA CLC. It is anticipated that by 2040 this hub should cover a territory with nearly 500,000 inhabitants.

A diversified economic fabric

The second largest economic basin in the Auvergne with 400 industrial companies and a dozen business parks, VVA continues to reorganise and diversify its economic and industrial base. Turned towards the sectors of the future (health, beauty, fitness, sport), VVA also benefits from various infrastructures and businesses in the service sector. The retail sector, business and advisory services and personal services complete the economic landscape.



The diversity of this industrial fabric supports and complements the richness and dynamism of the territory. The range of activities is extensive: plastics, packaging, electronics, electricity, metallurgy, the automobile industry, mechanical engineering, and the agro-food industry as well world famous luxury leather goods and cosmetics. The agro-food industry makes a major contribution to the identity of the territory with more than fifty companies based in the Vichy area. The same can be said for the Health-Beauty-Fitness sector which counts nearly eighty different businesses employing more than 2,000 people. The world famous Vichy cosmetics products are made at Creuzier-le-Vieux, one of the communes in VVA CLC.

The **Bioparc** (see photo), at Hauterive specialises in three main sectors, Health-Beauty-Fitness, Biomedical and Health-Nutrition, and accommodates nearly twenty SMEs, positioned in niche markets or in very specialised sectors of activity, which have created nearly 150 jobs. For further information: www.bioparc.com

VVA's privileged geographic location, its outward looking development policy and pro-active willingness to welcome new businesses, are all factors which more and more entrepreneurs are finding attractive: for example, the arrival of the Caillot Group in 2012 on the old industrial site of SEDIVER in Saint-Yorre; the major expansion of the activities of Altia and Maclean Power France on the Graves industrial site in Cusset; and the takeover of SIMOBI based on the Coquet business park at Saint-Germain-des-Fossés by the Wider Group.

Since September 2010, VVA CLC has included re-industrialisation as an important part of its economic development strategy.





Given the increase in the service sector in the area, as well the development of skills, competences and abilities in a variety of other sectors, VVA has developed an exceptional service industry centre: **THE ATRIUM**. The centre is designed and equipped to support service industry companies, whether at the start-up stage, development stage or mature companies looking for larger offices.

For further information: www.atrium-vichy.com

The Atrium key figures:

- Occupation level: 83% (May 2012)
- 8,000m² of buildings
- a business incubator with 20 furnished offices from 18 to 22m²
- serviced offices offering various sizes of office to rent, starting at 30m²
- two furnished offices to rent by the day with fully equipped meeting room
- flexible and modular open office spaces, to fit a company's particular needs
- a 15 seat video-conference room
- 110 space car park
- 1 internal inter-company nursery

The active population of VVA represents some 36,500 people being 49% of the population of the territory.

(source : Study for a local scheme for higher education – Economic Data – March 2012)

A rapidly expanding campus

VVA CLC continues to reinforce its attractiveness by developing the range of training courses available in anticipation of new métiers being created: this is on top of the 2,300 students already studying on one of the many professional vocational courses or university courses from Bac+2 to Bac+5.

Investing in the future of the territory also means reinforcing the quality levels of the training programmes on offer, maintaining student numbers, developing academic courses in phase with the professional realities of the employment market, and encouraging academic excellence and innovation.



The Albert Londres Campus was inaugurated on 15 May 2012, and already had a number of major advantages: a range of top quality higher education courses on an attractive campus site, as well as partnerships with the local economy and international connections. The Campus brings together ten higher education establishments: the **Lardy University College**, the **Lycée Valéry Larbaud Senior School**, the **Ecole des Métiers du Bâtiment** [Building and Construction School], the **lycée privé d'enseignement supérieur** [Private School for Further Education, previously the **École des Carrières Supérieures de Vichy-Higher Education and Careers School**, created in 1963), the **CAVILAM language school**, the **CREPS-Centre de Ressources d'Expertise et de Performance Sportives** [Sports Skills, Resources and Performance Centre], the **IFSI School of Nursing and Midwifery**, the **IFMK Physio-Massage Training Institute**, the **IEQT European Institute for Total Quality Management** and the **Cité scolaire Albert Londres** regrouping the previously named Presles general and technical lycée, the professional lycée and the Greta Dore Allier for adult education.

In 2011 the **Lardy University College** celebrated its 10th Anniversary, and has also grown in size during the first six months of 2012 through the acquisition of new premises in Rue Galliéni in Vichy. «*Going forward, more than 800 students on 17 courses (from Bac+2 to Bac+5) will be present on our magnificent 9,500m² urban campus situated in a privileged setting, in the middle of Vichy's famous parks*» says Jacqueline Girard, the college Director.

The **CAVILAM** language school is also located on the university college campus. It has a worldwide reputation for its work researching teaching methods, and has made a number of innovative contributions to the way languages are taught. During 2011 the school welcomed 3,500 language students from 110 different countries and a further 1,000 students from France.

The **Qualidev** Resources Centre, located in the heart of the College campus, is open to students and companies. It is a place to meet and exchange ideas and opinions. It also monitors new and innovative methods and provides up-to-date information and documentation concerning local, national and international problems of Quality Assurance, Security, the Environment and Sustainable Development (www.qualidev.fr).

One of the best range of sporting activities concentrated in one place in the whole of France

VVA has the privilege of being home to the largest sports economy platform in France, covering more than 500 hectares providing sports facilities for leisure activities and competitions.

The **Omnisports Sports Complex**, situated in 120ha of green belt with mature trees, bordering the river Allier, caters for nearly 30 different sporting disciplines with top level equipment, and regularly plays host to major sports teams and athletes (football, basketball, rugby, fencing, tennis, a top level bouldrome, athletics, archery, gymnastics, boxing, a canoe-kayak and rafting whitewater course ...). The complex also offers accommodation and restaurant facilities in the International Training Camp Centre, with 230 beds on site and a 400 seat restaurant with self-service and brasserie, the Palais du Lac exhibition centre and Vichy's Youth and Cultural Centre.



The **CREPS** Sports Skills, Resources and Performance Centre Vichy-Auvergne, sits in over 9ha of grounds adjacent to the Omnisports Sports Complex, and provides a new cursus each year for students in Sports and Sport Management, adapted to the real world of professional sporting activities. In 2011 the centre organised 56 training programmes for 1,057 students, with 152 part-time teaching staff.

Each year the 100ha widened river, forming the **Lac d'Allier** in the heart of Vichy, is the theatre for major rowing, canoe-kayak, water skiing and motorised watersports competitions. The site is certified as an **international venue** for canoe- Kayak competitions and for rowing, with the local club celebrating its 120th Anniversary in 2012.

The second edition of the **Challenge Triathlon** took place on 19 August 2012: with more than 1,000 participants, it has already become an international reference in the sport.

The programme at the Vichy-Bellerive **racecourse** is one of the most attractive and varied in France, with Trotting and Harness racing, Flat racing and Jump racing. From May to September there are 40 meetings with over 300 races, all PMU certified for off course betting. The racecourse also means €250m of bets placed by punters across France. The local economy benefits directly from the race meetings with on average 5,000 overnight stays in local accommodation and nearly 40,000 meals. The highlights of the season are the Trotting Festival and the Grand Flat Racing Week during July, which regularly attract more than 50,000 racegoers.



Sport in the CLC also means two **18 hole golf clubs** at the Vichy Sporting Club and Montpensier; the **Darragon Stadium** for local rugby and football matches; the **Sichon show jumping stadium**, one of the last grass arenas in Europe, with regular competitions including, every year, the well known Vichy Jumping International.

2012 is a great year for the **swimming centre**, which welcomed its **millionth visitor** on 3 April. From 15 to 23 July, the centre welcomed **Michael Phelps** and the rest of the **American**

Olympic Swimming Team for their final preparations before the London Olympics Games.



With nearly 300 local sports associations, 31 sports centres and more than 60 sporting installations, VVA is recognised as one of the best equipped and attractive sports destinations in France. Sport is the sector of activity which generates the largest number of overnight stays in local accommodation at 94,581 for 2011, and the largest indirect contribution to the local economy with €5.5m. VVA CLC presents a number of real advantages in the competitive national and international environment for hosting sporting events, with a combination of factors, including the diversity of sporting activities and installations available, and the variety of accommodation on offer, capable of satisfying both the most demanding clientele as well as «campers» in public camp-sites.

Advantages for holiday and business tourism

VVA has a rich and varied panoply of activities to offer tourists: spa and leisure activities, culture, heritage and history, sports and outdoor activities.

For culture there is the Palais des Congrès-Opéra de Vichy exhibition and conference centre, the Valéry Larbaud cultural centre, the Cusset Theatre, the Geysier Theatre in Bellerive-sur-Allier... The 500 town centre shops in Vichy are open on Sundays, due to the town's Spa status: the town also has two casinos. If you like history, visit the castles at Billy and Busset, or the Prison Tower Museum and underground galleries in Cusset; there are numerous other museums and interesting sites. The imprint of thermalism is still very present, with the spa rooms and springs and a particular and typical genre of architecture. The local area and community are on a very human scale, with countryside and farmland very close to the urban centre.



In terms of accommodation VVA has a large range of good quality hotels providing 1,400 rooms, from budget to 4 stars: from this point of view VVA is better equipped than numerous regional capitals, for example Clermont-Ferrand.



In terms of business tourism the Palais des Congrès-Opéra de Vichy has the advantages of an 18,000m² town-centre site with a variety of different sized and modifiable rooms. There is also the Palais du Lac exhibition centre at Bellerive which has a 2,000m² multifunctional and modifiable area situated alongside the River Allier. Business tourism, whether for a congress, seminar, national or international general assembly or trade fair, generates 75,000 overnight stays in local accommodation. Since 2007, the turnover for this sector has increased by twelve percent each year, with an increase of more than thirty eight percent for the 3 and 4 star hotels.

The local hotels and sports centre accommodation counts for more than 200,000 overnight stays each year.

One of the most modern spa tourism sites in Europe

Vichy is considered one of the most modern spa resorts in Europe, offering a range of services from traditional spa treatment to a personalised fitness and health plan.

In fact VVA benefits from some exceptional spa services and equipment, inherited from the golden age of spa treatment and "taking the waters", unique in France and on a par with the best in Europe. For more than a century Vichy was the premier spa resort in France, at its apogee during the Second Empire and the colonial period, when the town was christened the «queen of the spa towns». Over the last thirty years Vichy has redefined its vocation, moving from a traditional spa resort to activities more involved in personal well-being: slimming programmes, spa bath therapy, fitness programmes.



Treatments, care and the different programmes are carried out in various spa buildings, some of which are new, such as the Spa Callou and the Spa Vichy Célestins, or refurbished up to modern standards, such as the Dômes Spa Centre. They all have the latest equipment and technology in terms hygiene and personalised care.

In March 2012, the World Spa Awards Ceremony in London rewarded the Vichy Spa Hôtel Les Célestins for being one of the three best Spa destinations in Europe, and for being the only «Spa Resort» in the world with a medical health centre, which also has a specialised centre for women. This innovative concept [Med'well Institute], unique in France, is run by Dr Thierry Haag and covers the integrality of a woman's life from contraception, to procreation and the menopause.

The Allier

Geographically at a number of European crossroads the Allier is a strategic territory and fully intends to take advantage of its central position.

The population erosion over the last 3 decades seems to have been reversed. The Department is getting stronger and is attracting new inhabitants. This stabilisation is mainly due to an increasing number of people settling in the Bourbonnais, which INSEE attributes to the area's increased attractiveness.

- 343,114 inhabitants as of 1st Jan. 2010 (source INSEE)
- 47 inhabitants/km²
- 7,340 km²
- 320 Communes
- 3 major urban areas: Montluçon, Moulins and Vichy
- Moulins is the seat of the Department's Préfecture



The Ambassadors of the Allier

The Allier's Economic Expansion Committee has created a club of Ambassadors, made up from company managers either originating from or having worked in the Allier. The idea is to create a business network to generate new activities and business in the Department and to promote the Allier in the outside world. www.ambassadeurs-allier.fr

Different Economic Sectors

The agro-food industry, transport and logistics, mechanical engineering, electronics, metallurgy, plastics, chemicals, eco-activities, nutrition and health, luxury goods and wood; are the main sectors that make up the wealth and identity of the Department.



With 343,114 inhabitants and an employment market of 131,000 jobs, the Allier confirms its position as the second most important Department in the Auvergne. Rather than have one central economic area, the Allier has three major economic and urban zones centred on Montluçon, Moulins and Vichy: each of which supports its part of the territory. Each zone has its own industrial specificity, with production relying on a rich diversity of SME's, in terms of both quality and quantity, reinforced by the presence of a number of international groups. The main source of employment is industry, employing 28% of the working population. The rich industrial history of the Allier has provided a highly skilled and qualified workforce, which has been able to adapt to the challenges of international competition. Agriculture is still an important activity and the quality of the produce makes the agro-foodstuffs sector a major contributor to Department's economy. The Allier is

the 5th Department in France in terms of organic agriculture, and counts several label awards for meat production, as well as AOC attributions for poultry and wine.

The Allier has a central geographic position in France and Europe in the road, motorway and rail networks, being located at both the North-South and East-West crossroads. This has led to the development of a successful logistics and transport sector and the Department has become an attractive base for the industry.

The eco-industrial sector counts nearly fifty companies with different specialisations: construction, energy, protection, recycling and waste treatment and elimination.



The Allier has had a tradition of producing and working with wood for many centuries. The Department counts 125,000ha of woodland, of which 119,000ha is for timber production, which along with the timber transformation industry, is very active.

The Auvergne



The Auvergne is a made up of contrasts: 24th urban area in France; 8th industrial area; 1,343,964 inhabitants; geographic area 26,000 km².

The Regional Council is working hard to make the Auvergne more attractive, more open and with a more balanced development in the region's territories. This is being achieved mainly through the Regional Scheme for Sustainable Territorial Development and the Regional Scheme for Territorial Infrastructure. The region's strategic position provides an opportunity to inject some dynamism into its economy and make the territory more open. Its increased attractiveness is not just in terms of employment but also in the quality of lifestyle. To attract new inhabitants, the Auvergne is going to «sell itself» to the rest of France, to attract entrepreneurs and investors. The process is already working: over the last 10 years the region has moved from 13th to 10th place in terms of attractiveness.

Welcoming new populations

Welcoming new inhabitants has become a priority, to generate a new vitality in the Auvergne. The Regional Development Agency for the Territories of the Auvergne (ARDTA) was created to implement, in partnership with the territories, several innovative tools to increase dynamism in the region:

- entrepreneur residence programmes
- the **auvergnelife.tv** web site, covering all you need to know about acquiring a company or creating a new business
- a quality assurance approach unique in France

Partners

- ARDTA – Regional Council (www.auvergnelife.tv)
- The Allier General Council welcome and support centre (www.allier.fr/1333-mission-accueil.htm)
- Vichy Val d'Allier Développement economic development agency (www.vichy-economie.com)
- Le Pays Vichy-Auvergne (www.paysvichyauvergne.com)
- Logehab (for employee mobility – www.logehab.fr)

The region's image is becoming more and more positive. Visions of empty landscapes have been replaced by «product images» with the new Auvergne New World brand name (Auvergne Nouveau Monde).

«Auvergne new world»

«Auvergne new world» brings together all the region's economic actors, institutions, cultural actors, tourist professionals and civil associations who share the same goal: working together to make the Auvergne more attractive.

« *The Auvergne is a new world, a world that should be rediscovered: open, standing together, getting involved, respecting the environment, with an intense creative capacity. We have a lot of key strengths which are not well known. We need to publicise that fact and get rid of all the old clichés*», says Philippe Laurent, President of Auvergne Nouveau Monde. In bringing all the different actors together, the Association hopes to get them to **work together** to increase the attractiveness of the Auvergne, with a **common territorial** marketing strategy. It is an occasion for all the participants to **agree on a common objective** and see through a global, coherent, and **unifying** project for the territory.



The idea: gather together and mobilise all the actors from both the public and the private sectors who are concerned by the attractiveness of the Auvergne.

The aim: organise promotion and communications campaigns around a common added value theme

Interest: positive reciprocity: more added value for the Auvergne = more added value for Auvergne origin products = more added value for the territory = easier to recruit ...

Regrouping for better innovation and increased competitiveness Clusters

In 2010, the Auvergne region had 7 excellence clusters in the following sectors: health; industry; mechanical engineering, mechatronics engineering; IT and Communications Technologies and the environment. Several companies from the VVA area participate in these clusters, thereby demonstrating their commitment to the region's economic development.

A regional cluster is «a group of companies, public or private sector research laboratories, and higher education institutions, which pool their resources and projects to improve innovation and development». Attributing the title of Cluster reinforces the cooperation between companies, which is a phenomenon already present and practised in the Auvergne. In the context of fierce global competition, particularly in the industrial sector, the best way to survive is to be at the forefront. Clusters have a number of advantages: they help organise a particular sector and develop research and innovation by bringing together companies, research organisations and education and training institutions. The underlying objective is, of course, to encourage job creation. Members of a Cluster can access new markets, obtain new skills and know-how, new technologies and develop projects on a joint basis: all of which would be inaccessible if they remained isolated.

The 7 excellence clusters

- E2IA:** Innovative eco-companies;
- Mémo Mécatronique:** Mechanical and mechatronics engineering;
- Auvergne TIC:** IT and Communications Technologies;
- JCEP:** Plastics, plastic extrusion;
- Analgesia Partnership:** Analgesics, pain management;
- IRP:** Pharmaceutical probiotics;
- Nutravita:** Food, Nutrition and Health;



Corporate testimonials from various cluster members from VVA CLC

«The only way to compete with large companies is to join forces»



Serge Torti, President of Yansys SAS, Bioparc Hauterive, is a member of the Auvergne TIC Clusters (IT and Communications Technologies) since its creation in 2009, and is President of the Health Commission.

«Regrouping several centres, the Auvergne TIC Cluster includes everything that gravitates around information and communications (companies, laboratories...). The Cluster has more and more members: today we are around thirty. It works very well. Caroline Poinson runs the cluster. The idea is to develop networking, redistribute information, help with administrative tasks and putting together dossiers, and of course pooling resources and collaboration. A Cluster is a very efficient way of creating links between its different members. For us as a small company, the only way to succeed, particularly when working in a very highly specialised field, is to develop international business and produce innovative solutions.

The trouble is that innovation has a high cost. Designing a product that does not yet exist, solving scientific problems and equations, finding new technical solutions and then testing them to make sure they work, involves substantial human and material resources. That was where being part of a cluster was useful for Yansys. Among other things, it gave us the resources to position ourselves in the innovation market and find the right people to speak to. It is important to be part of this sort of dynamic. »



«Keeping the activity in-house»



Bernard Ravoux, Ravoux Automatismes, ZI Vichy-Rhue at Creuzier le Vieux, member of the MEMO Cluster since January 2012

«The interesting thing about a Cluster is being able to meet other companies in the same sector of activity, as we do not necessarily know one another, and to see if we can work together and improve our businesses together. Working together as a group, we can get into bigger markets, which we could not do if we were on our own. We have converging interests. Which is what I am looking for. The Cluster still allows its members a fair amount of liberty, it is not really a constraint.»

André Hervé who runs the Cluster is there to organise the networking side. A number of projects based on regional collaboration are already in the pipeline. In general, VSEs and SMEs feel increasingly isolated because of the globalisation of the markets. It's risky if you decide to just stay in your corner. As long as things are going well, you say to yourself that everything is alright. But when niche markets or regular customers are no longer there, then you are up against it. Most companies involved in mechanical and mechatronics engineering are not very strong on the marketing side. They have a perfect understanding of their specialisation, but nearly all have no experience in marketing and communications. Technicians are not really very good at sales. This is where the Cluster can help provide a solution. Everybody has the same objectives: protecting your business and trying to find new ways for improvement and development.

In our business you need to have a vision of the added value and service you provide. Working with a Cluster is useful. You cannot continue to have a strategy where all your production activities disappear. You have got to do something about it. It is still possible to keep our activities in-house »



«Meeting other companies and exchanging ideas»



Jean-Christophe Sergère – SETUBIO – Bioparc – Member of the NUTRAVITA Cluster since 2009

« Being part of a certain number of networks is fundamental to the strategy of our company. We are part of Céréales Vallée [Cereal Valley], a Competitive Cluster; the Biofilm Cluster, and since 2009 the Nutravita Cluster.

Nutravita allows us to meet and exchange ideas with other actors in the sectors where we are active. It is typically networking and sowing the seeds for future collaboration. We also benefit from certain joint activities and shared information. The members regularly receive a newsletter letting us know what is happening in our sector. Lucile Bruchet, a project engineer, runs the Cluster. She helps us organise joint programmes.

Being part of the Cluster is useful in terms of raising finance. Participating in a collective movement gives a more dynamic image to the company.

We are lucky at Nutravita to have Philippe Laurent as President. He is extremely dynamic and really pushes us to develop joint projects. Which is very motivating and gives us a real boost. It's also very positive, because that's our strategy as well."*

* President of Auvergne Nouveau Monde, Nutravita, and the 3iNature Group



Text : Céline Faulconnier