



## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMPAGNIE FRUITIERE ENDOWMENT FUND'S TRUST-BASED SPONSORSHIP IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Since 2022, the Compagnie Fruitière Foundation has been implementing a new strategy to meet the challenges of sustainable food. In addition to the thematic and strategic reorientation, a new method of supporting projects is being developed in partnership with project leaders invested in France (Marseille) and in several West African countries. The aim is to develop qualitative forms of collaboration and consolidate an ecosystem of players involved in these themes. The Fund is supported in this approach by NARRAU, a player in action research, which facilitates dialogue with project leaders and offers a reflective analysis of the actions carried out. Together, these different stakeholders are experimenting with and building a patronage of trust, and Marie-Pierre Fabre (President of the Endowment Fund), Christelle Owona (Africa Project Manager) and Paul Bouzon (Marseille Project Manager) tell us about their experiences. From the choice of theme to the methodological approach, they discuss the renewed relationship with the project sponsors and share their ambitions for the future of this strategy.

### THE FOUNDATION'S NEW STRATEGY

#### The choice of Sustainable Food

The creation of the Foundation and its development are imbued with the values of the Fabre family and thus those of the Compagnie Fruitière Group.

*"The Fund was created to provide the company with a legal, recognised and well-defined tool for its sponsorship activities. The impetus came when the company set up a hospital in the Bodo region of Côte d'Ivoire (Hôpital Saint Jean-Baptiste de Bodo Tiassale) (...) the Order of Malta and the Compagnie Fruitière Foundation are two of the founding members of the association that administers and manages the hospital". (Marie-Pierre Fabre)*

As soon as the Foundation's first articles of association were ratified, access to healthcare was one of its major concerns, very quickly associated with three other pillars of action: education, culture and the environment. Today, food-related health issues in the North and South remain central to Marie-Pierre Fabre.

President of the Foundation since 2016, and drawing on her professional experience as a pharmacist in Marseille's 3rd arrondissement, she has combined these health issues with the local realities observed by herself and her colleagues to come to a position on food issues.

Since 2022, the Foundation has focused on sustainable food. Three areas of intervention have been defined: human health and food safety; food education; agricultural entrepreneurship, resilience and biodiversity. With this new focus, the actions of the Endowment Fund and Compagnie Fruitière are mutually enriching.

*"This new theme (...) resonates with the company's activities (...). Both in terms of its appropriation by employees, in terms of the meaning it gives to the company's mission, and in terms of the coherence it gives to external communications vis-à-vis project sponsors or civil society in the broadest sense". (Paul Bouzon)*

#### Creating the right conditions for collaboration with project sponsors

The Compagnie Fruitière Foundation has undergone a thematic and strategic reorientation, and has sought to strengthen its relations with project sponsors, a desire expressed by Marie-Pierre Fabre since the beginning of her presidency. By being more present for project sponsors from an operational point of view, and by communicating with them upstream and throughout the support period to define areas for collaborative work, the Fund is strengthening its actions for the benefit of projects and target audiences. Like a family business, it promotes human relations by encouraging people to get to know each other and listen to each other.

*"On the side of the project sponsors, (...) they have a partner who is closer to them (...) in the sense that we haven't just financed a project, they deploy it, and then after 6 months they send us a report (...). We try to develop this closer relationship with the project sponsors (...) As far as possible, this means signing the agreement in person, which brings a slightly more human dimension to our partnership, and then regular but precise meetings with the project sponsors, because we have defined a certain number of indicators [for understanding and contextualising the project]". (Christelle Owona)*

A close, qualitative relationship is synonymous with rigour. The Fund's team has been working to reorganise the selection committee and develop its new strategy. The Fund is gradually proposing to repeat its partnerships with certain applicants from one year to the next. On average, collaboration with project sponsors lasts 2 to 3 years. This choice improves the durability and sustainability of the actions undertaken. In 2024, almost half of the projects supported will be renewed partnership agreements.

## **DEVELOPING TRUST-BASED PHILANTHROPY, QUESTIONING THE INTERACTIONS AT WORK IN THE WORLD OF PHILANTHROPY**

A proposal combining traditional tools, human resources and skills sponsorship

The Foundation offers project promoters the opportunity to work together in a framework that encourages the sharing of experience and good practice, with a number of key stages: project selection; agreement; milestones; discussions on the interim report; and the final report. In addition to the impact measurement tools and traditional indicators used to collect technical data, the Foundation focuses its support on the qualitative aspects of projects, particularly their impact on target audiences, and on the *raison d'être* of the supporting organisation. To this end, it provides human resources and encourages contact with the Foundation and Compagnie Fruitière teams. For example, the NGO AGRISUD was put in touch with SCB's CSR teams in Côte d'Ivoire. Meetings were organised, and SCB contributed its expertise in the field and its knowledge of local players to support AGRISUD's PROFIT project.

*"It was important to also have the opinion and eye of the subsidiary on the ground (...) there were discussions about the villages, the different locations (...) the different problems, the expectations of everyone, and where they had identified support needs. (...) and then a very important area, identifying the extent to which there can be interaction with the subsidiary's teams, so what skills sponsorship, or in any case what technical expertise could also be provided by the subsidiary". (Christelle Owona)*

Some project promoters can also count on NARRAU's support, whatever the stage their project has reached.

### **An intermediary to facilitate exchanges**

As a third-party player, NARRAU works with the promoters of four projects to both convey the voice of the Fund and offer high-quality, tailor-made support in a neutral environment that adapts to the needs of the promoters and the project. With associations of

volunteers and committed citizens who are starting up a project, NARRAU supports the structuring of the project (mission and raison d'être, prioritisation of activities, reflections on the posture of the players and the effects of the project) and implements qualitative monitoring tools. With development professional associations, NARRAU provides a reflective perspective, facilitates dialogue with stakeholders, and supports advocacy initiatives and the capitalisation of experience. NARRAU's work, which is praised by project sponsors, is part of a long-term approach to the project, enabling the various stakeholders to structure themselves more effectively and improve the action taken to serve the target groups in the field.

### **A team committed to redefining sponsor/sponsor relationships**

The Fund's support offers a different dynamic for communication and discussion between sponsors and project sponsors, one that can be adapted depending on how structured the sponsors are and how far their project has progressed.

With professionalised players who have strong reporting skills and mastery of standard impact measurement tools, the dialogue offered by the Foundation makes it possible to build an approach that is closer to the stakeholders, so that they can work together more effectively. Stakeholders discuss any difficulties they may have encountered to find solutions together and experiment with innovative tools. The reports are not written in the expected language, but with a view to examining the issues in greater depth, so as to provide a more detailed analysis.

When project promoters are just starting out or are less institutionalised, the Fund's support enables them to structure themselves better by providing them with practical resources in the field to help them improve their tools. These two approaches help to make the impact of these organisations in their field more qualitative, and lead the Fund to develop a general reflection on its approach to the local realities of Marseille and West Africa.

**As well as providing financial support, the Fondation's new strategy strengthens an ecosystem of committed players and seeks to create the conditions of trust that will enable it to move beyond a logic of accountability to donors.**

**From selecting projects to providing support, the Compagnie Fruitière Foundation has reworked its tools, its approach and its procedures, defending a qualitative approach in order to meet the challenges of sustainable food.**

### **MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD**

The Foundation supports project promoters in their efforts to contribute to a collective debate on sustainable food, a multidimensional theme that encompasses a range of social issues.

#### **Adapting to local conditions**

Linked to the three areas of intervention, the various projects supported by the Fund, beyond their own specificities, deal with cross-cutting themes. Without being able to address all the dimensions of sustainable food - at the risk of offering overly general support - the Fund has focused on the issues specific to the areas in which the company operates, Marseille and certain West African countries. The territorial approach adopted by the Fund helps to strengthen its actions and impact on target populations, and to work with relevant players.

In Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, the Fund is working on issues of agricultural entrepreneurship, learning sustainable production methods, sector structuring and education. The Fund's reflective approach to the projects it supports, and its links with the Compagnie Fruitière's local sectors, enable it to identify a common thread linking resilience, food sovereignty and economic opportunities for local people, particularly young people.

In Marseille, where social inequalities are high, the issues of lack of access to food and poor diet intersect, and have been all the more highlighted by the Covid-19 health crisis. The Fund also works on issues of education and social inclusion, and with disadvantaged groups, particularly migrants. This work helps to support experimentation and local and appropriate solutions, with both young associations and players with a national reach rooted in the Marseille network of players.

#### **A systemic approach to a cross-disciplinary issue**

By developing areas of intervention that take into account the four main principles defining sustainable food - nutrition, environment, socio-economic and

socio-cultural - and offering tailor-made support, the Fund is developing a strategy that meets several of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN, and takes into account recent scientific research on this contemporary issue.

Faced with the ecological imperative of transition and the many food challenges we face, the Fund supports high-quality local initiatives that develop alternatives to rethink the food aid system, raise awareness of the right to healthy food for all, and strengthen people's power to act.

**In short, The Foundation's new strategy advocates a systemic approach to better respond to food issues, and proposes detailed analyses of different local realities.**

**These analyses constitute a wealth of operational knowledge, the result of multi-stakeholder collaboration, which deserves to be disseminated to take part in the scientific debate and to public players in the regions.**

In Marseille, the Fund is playing its part in the local drive to improve access to healthy food and combat the various forms of precariousness. The projects supported seek to develop sustainable initiatives by empowering partners (L'école comestible), and to offer an alternative model to traditional food aid (Armée du Salut). In Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, the projects supported by the Fund are developing stimulating ideas about the sustainability of their activity. The Fund is involved in activities that combine training for local people with improvements in agri-environmental and socio-economic performance (Agrisud), and that capitalise on their actions as part of an advocacy strategy (CFSI). In addition to regional differences, questions about the long-term viability and sustainability of the projects supported by the Fund cut across all the projects, further fuelling the renewal of relationships between sponsors and project promoters within a patronage of trust.

*« We're in the early stages of building something. I think the approach we're building together, with NARRAU, gives even more credibility to this notion of trust in patronage, or trust in philanthropy (...) it's moving, it's changing (...) this approach is alive (...) it's not static, and it's constantly going to improve. » (Marie-Pierre Fabre)*

*The Compagnie Fruitière Foundation team prides itself on the support approach it has developed, a guarantee of close relationships for a more efficient and qualitative impact on the ground and in the service of the actions carried out and the target populations. The flexible format of the Foundation gives it flexibility in the way it acts, and the possibility of developing its tools to better structure trust-based sponsorship.*

***By going beyond the scale of individual projects, the Compagnie Fruitière Foundation is positioning itself on its own scale as a player in philanthropy and is taking a reflective look at its practice in order to participate more effectively in social debates and encourage collective thinking by drawing inspiration from existing initiatives launched by other groups, particularly businesses.***

*In order to change scale and recognise the local initiatives it supports, the Fund is calling for a real need for synergy between the private sector, voluntary organisations and the public sector, starting with the organisation of forums where people can get to know each other.*

