



ARRAS TECHNICAL CENTER

HÄAGEN-DAZS

EXCLUSIVE

INTERVIEW

Françoise Bechu
Global R&D Director



Häagen-Dazs

IN A NUTSHELL

In 2022, General Mills decided to invest €13 million in **the creation of a worldwide Häagen-Dazs R&D center.**

The group chose to base this center in the immediate vicinity of its long-standing plant in Tilloy-lès-Mofflaines, near Arras. At the 5th International Investment Awards ceremony organized by Nord France Invest, Häagen-Dazs won the Innovative Investment Award. Interview with Françoise Bechu, Global R&D Director, Häagen-Dazs.





FRANÇOISE BECHU

Global R&D Director
Häagen-Dazs



What does winning Nord France Invest's Innovative Investment Award mean to you?

This award is a source of good energy and enthusiasm. It is a tribute to all the teams who have been mobilized by our project to establish the Häagen-Dazs global R&D center in Arras, next to our long-standing plant in Tilloy-les-Mofflaines, the only production site for more than 90 countries worldwide.

The aim of this center is to develop our range of ice creams by perfecting

our manufacturing techniques and the excellence of our product compositions.

Our €13 million investment has strengthened our local roots and created career opportunities for our employees.



What criteria did the General Mills Group, owner of the Häagen-Dazs brand, use to decide to establish this world-class R&D center in the Hauts-de-France region?

The Hauts-de-France region was a natural choice, since this is where we've been producing Häagen-Dazs ice cream for 32 years now. It is the only worldwide production center in Europe. It produces around 20 million gallons of ice cream a year, 80% of which is exported to over 90 countries. The immediate proximity to our factory was a key factor in terms

of agility and flexibility. The same goes for the main ingredients in our products (including fresh cream and milk), as well as their quality.

How is the regional R&D ecosystem an asset for Häagen-Dazs?

Our links with the regional R&D structures are at the very root of our network. Locally, we are in contact with key stakeholders such as the NSL Cluster (a competitive cluster that focuses on Nutrition, Health and Longevity), Bioeconomy For Change (a leading bioeconomy network in France and worldwide) and Adrianor (Agrifood Technical Center). They support us in our technical watch and in our search for laboratories that can provide solutions to our challenges. Our central location also allows us to be close to international stakeholders.

For instance, we joined forces in June 2023 with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, EIT Food, to launch a challenge among startups, with a partnership contract at the end.

Do you feel that you have the support of the regional authorities?

The regional authorities - both institutional and economic - have been supporting us in the development of our activities, including financially, since we established here in 1992. If you add to this a supportive ecosystem for companies, major infrastructures and a spirit of innovation, all the factors are in place for growth in the Hauts-de-France region.

We are convinced of the importance of having an external network in order to meet the challenges of the future.



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