



MYSODA
EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW

Dirk Uyttenhove

CEO Mysoda France and Benelux

Rodolphe David

General Manager

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MYSODA **is revolutionizing** **the sparkling water** **maker market.**

MySoda is the story of the Finnish David, who set out to challenge the industry's Goliath: Sodastream.

Founded in 2011, the company has placed sustainability and local roots at the heart of its DNA. The greenest possible production, bio-based materials, zero plastic... These are just some of the strategic choices that set it apart from the long-standing market leader.

In 2019, MySoda saw the potential of the French and Benelux markets and decided to set up its first factory outside Finland in Comines, in the Hauts-de-France region. A €1 million investment in the middle of the Covid crisis, a clear sign of the group's confidence in the region.

Five years later, Dirk Uyttenhove, CEO of MySoda France and Benelux, and Rodolphe David, Sales Director, look back at the reasons behind this decision and take stock of a venture that continues to make the group's future sparkle!





DIRK UYTENHOVE

CEO Mysoda France and Benelux



RODOLPHE DAVID

General Manager



**Can you tell us
about MySoda?**

MySoda is a Finnish company founded in 2011 that designs and manufactures high-end soda machines for home use. We are competing with SodaStream, the leading German brand in this sector.

MySoda has a strong environmental commitment. **Can you tell us more about the different actions you have in place?**

At MySoda, we have put ecology at the heart of our development. This involves not only the filling of our cylinders, the composition of our products, and our service providers, but also our strategic decisions.

Our founder's first action was to set up a CO₂ cylinder filling facility in Finland, very close to our original market. That was our number one competitor's big differentiating advantage. We have reproduced this model for our Comines site by sourcing our supplies from Air Liquide, which is located right next to the factory.

Then, over the years, we wanted to take this approach further by tackling other aspects of the product, such as materials. Now, our machines are made from biocomposites sourced from wood supplied by factories close to our production sites.

We then did the same with our flavor concentrates and chose suppliers that were as local as possible. For example, in France, we work with Abeille in Cholet, a subsidiary of LSDH.

All these strategic choices have enabled us to drastically reduce our environmental footprint and set ourselves apart from SodaStream.

A policy that we have also applied to scopes 2 and 3 of our production. We buy our pallets and cardboard nearby. Our carrier is a local company. Even in terms of marketing, we work with companies located within 62 miles around us.

And we continue to improve our processes every day. The CO₂ produced by most market players comes from fossil fuels, for example. At MySoda, we have

found a way to improve this by using Bio-CO₂, which is entirely based on renewable resources and extracted from biogenic processes such as bioethanol production. The carbon footprint for the production of 425 g of fossil CO₂ is approximately 700 g. With our biogenic CO₂,

it becomes zero. Even the filling of our cylinders is designed to have the lowest possible impact thanks to the use of solar and wind energy.

Every strategic decision is carefully considered based on its impact and the greenest possible solution. Local is our motto.

Why did you want to develop in France?

The main reason for choosing France is its market potential. Back in 2019, the home sparkling water market had not yet matured in France, even though it was the second largest market after Germany. This gave us the opportunity to challenge the market leader while benefiting from a business model that suited us.

Producing as close as possible to our customers is a key factor in reducing our carbon footprint and thus meeting our environmental objectives. France therefore became the obvious choice as the location for this development project.

We were the first challenger in the sector; before us, there was only Sodastream.

It also has a strong competitive advantage as it borders the Benelux countries and is close to England and the Netherlands. We are even in the process of negotiating with Portugal, Spain, Italy, and other countries. All of these countries are of interest to us in the relatively near future.



And why did you choose to set up in Hauts-de-France?

Hauts-de-France is located at the crossroads of Northern Europe with a dense multimodal transport network. This makes it a real asset for our distribution in France and Europe, in terms of producing close to our markets.

Finally, on a much more pragmatic note, Hauts-de-France has a large amount of land available, and our local contacts have successfully presented us with sites that meet very specific requirements. A key factor for us.

From Comines, MySoda can set out to conquer the West!

You mentioned some very strict specifications. Can you tell us more about that?

Of course. We wanted to set up in an existing building at least 16-feet high, on a site measuring between 21,528 and 32,292 square feet, with the possibility of installing a large tank for storing the gas used in our cylinders.

Two other determining factors also came into play. The proximity of major roads for the smooth and efficient distribution of our products. And the presence of key suppliers for our production, such as Air Liquide for food-grade CO₂.

Nord France Invest and Hello Lille, with whom we were in contact, found a site that met these criteria and where we could install outdoor silos, which is not possible everywhere, even on industrial sites.

What major challenges did you encounter while setting up in the region?

Unfortunately, we made the decision to expand at the end of 2019. It took us only four months to find the ideal site for our factory and approve it. However, the operational phase of the project coincided with Covid.

It was therefore more complicated to set up the site and recruit during this period, which delayed our launch by a few months. Our business therefore officially began in 2021.



You mentioned Nord France Invest and Hello Lille as local partners for your development. How did they support you and what do you think of it?

Business France Finland put us in touch with Nord France Invest. NFI and Hello Lille helped us find a location that met the criteria we mentioned earlier and put us in touch with potential suppliers in the area.

What particularly struck me about this support was the responsiveness of our contact at the time, Olivier Charras. We felt that the people involved in this

project were genuinely interested in our development and brought us new ideas. This proactive approach was very useful and enabled us to quickly identify the right solutions and contacts. We didn't have to wait weeks for a response.

With Nord France Invest at our side, we had someone to guide us, an extra member in our team.



Looking back five years later, what have you really found in Hauts-de-France?

We have no regrets about setting up in Comines. This geographical choice for the development of our European business suits us very well.

Especially since we have found the suppliers we need to operate within the local economic fabric, which gives us optimal responsiveness and fluidity for our production.

In terms of retailers, major distributors such as Leclerc, Système U, and Casino placed their trust in us from the very start. We then realized that retailer brands offered significant potential for commercial development and we adjusted our strategy. We arrived in 2019 with the idea of selling our products. Today, we have diversified and produce brands for major retailers such as Carrefour, Leclerc, and Monoprix. This now accounts for 80% of our revenue.

At the same time, Biocoop launched its own MySoda brand in its stores.

And, of course, we benefit from the positive image of products made in France. This criterion was also our gateway to working with retailers.

Beyond the business aspects, we have personally enjoyed settling in the region for its incredible quality of life. Northern France is a true European

Beyond business, setting up in Hauts-de-France also means enjoying an incredible quality of life.



crossroads. In just a few minutes from Lille, you can be on the beautiful beaches of Belgium or in the European capital, Brussels. You can easily get to Luxembourg or take a high-speed train and be in England in 1 hour and 20 minutes...

And to dispel a common misconception, rainfall in the north was lower in 2024 than in western France. That's a point worth highlighting!

Looking back on these five years and considering the potential that the region represents for your development, what are your prospects for development in the short or medium term?

Rodolphe and I started the MySoda adventure in France together. Today, there are 14 of us.

Our ambition is to increase, or even double, our production capacity. But to do that, we still need to decide between robotics, increasing working hours, hiring more staff, opening an additional line... All these issues are currently being considered.

Was there anything in particular that struck you about business in France?

Indeed, I think that the commitment of workers in northern France is quite exceptional.

In my professional past, I used to live and work in Hauts-de-France for a very large American company, none other than Coca-Cola...

There is genuine trust in Hauts-de-France. Even an employee who is not a manager has the keys to the building.

Based on these two experiences, I can tell you that the workers here are committed. They have a work ethic that you don't find further south, that's for sure. Down there, for example, if a contract isn't signed, it's not good. Here in Hauts-de-France, even if the contract is still being drawn up, business can begin.

What advice would you give to a foreign investor?

I think our best advice would be to seek help by contacting economic development agencies. We were fortunate enough to meet Nord France Invest through Business France Finland, then Hello Lille, and this really helped accelerate our development (well, if it hadn't been for Covid!).

NEED HELP WITH YOUR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT?

CONTACT US!



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