

Exporting is no longer an option, but a strategic necessity

France's population growth is slowing. Domestic markets are stabilising. For many agri-food companies, growth will have to come from elsewhere. Exporting is not incompatible with food sovereignty; indeed, it is a key driver of it. Diversifying markets, spreading fixed costs and securing business models: international expansion boosts resilience. Audrey Ashworth is convinced: *"Feeding France and exporting our expertise are not incompatible; quite the contrary."*

At a time when economic balances are shifting, markets are tightening and competition is intensifying, France can no longer treat exports as a secondary option.

But whilst France hesitates, others are moving forward; the message is clear. In 2024, for the first time, France was overtaken by Italy as the leading exhibiting country at SIAL Paris. And for the 2026 edition, at this stage of marketing, France ranks just behind Italy, Spain, Turkey and Greece. In light of this, the trade fair director remarks, *"France likes to remind people that it is a major player in the agri-food sector. But for how much longer? In global trade, there is no place for nostalgia. Only action counts."*

Audrey Ashworth, Director of SIAL Paris

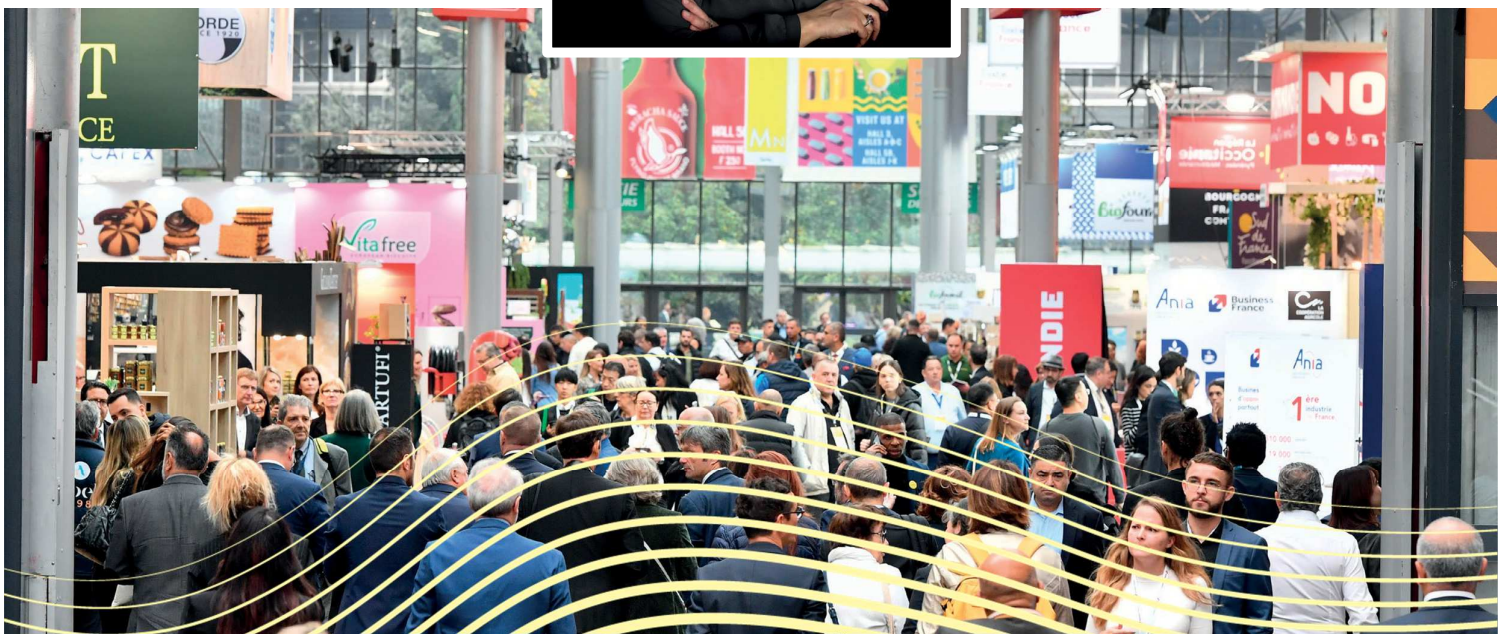


Thanks to its position within the SIAL Network, the world's leading network of agri-food trade fairs, SIAL Paris closely monitors the aggressive strategies being deployed elsewhere: massive public subsidies in Italy or Turkey, and structured schemes such as Food Export

The Forum in Belgium, the Export Academy as part of the Export Growth Plan in the UK, the CanExport SME programme in Canada, and the Market Readiness Assistance (MRA) scheme in Singapore, which co-funds companies' preparations for international expansion. In some countries, these policies are accompanied by targeted training programmes and webinars to help SMEs tackle complex markets, such as South Korea, which has made K-food a lever of influence by placing it at the heart of its soft power strategy.

In 2024, SIAL Paris welcomed visitors from nearly 200 countries, as well as 110 official delegations, including 50 ambassadors, 16 parliamentarians and 17 French and foreign ministers. This concentration of diplomatic and economic figures highlights a reality: the global food trade is actively taking shape. Audrey Ashworth confirms: *"We are seeing countries moving forward in an extremely coordinated manner. They are supporting their businesses, funding their visibility and structuring their supply chains. France*

has everything it takes to be a leader once again. But we must all want it collectively."



SIAL Paris: a global launchpad... in France

With 8,000 exhibitors across 280,000 m², SIAL Paris is France's largest trade fair across all sectors, far surpassing other B2B events such as Batimat or Maison & Objet. It serves as a and a strategic hub for accelerating international growth.

Trade fairs remain the primary way for major international buyers to discover new products. Audrey Ashworth explains: *"International buyers source products primarily at trade fairs because they want to see and taste the products, meet the executives, and understand the innovations. And because trust is built face-to-face."*

Recognising the importance of this, SIAL Paris is taking active steps to attract high-level buyers and is strengthening its business support services: a new AI-powered matchmaking platform enables exhibitors and buyers to arrange targeted meetings, whilst the Meet & Match area will host speed sessions to speed up decision-making.

This also involves fostering an active international community throughout the year, as demonstrated by a recent strategic event held in Dubai, which brought together a select group of international buyers for a focused discussion, enabling relationships to be built well before the trade fair opens. *"Our role is no longer simply to bring together supply and demand for five days. We connect, we listen and we lay the groundwork in advance,"* explains the director of SIAL Paris.

The key figures underscore the event's impact: 5,000 top international buyers with a combined purchasing budget of €60 billion, 92% of visitors being decision-makers, an average of 136 contacts per stand, 88% of exhibitors having signed deals with new countries, and 81% of buyers concluding transactions either on-site or after the event.

SIAL Paris is also a strategic intelligence tool. With SIAL Insights, companies can analyse global trends, identify promising segments and anticipate.

"The more demanding and volatile markets become, the more crucial support becomes," says Audrey Ashworth. *"In a more complex world, we need to understand faster, decide faster and innovate more effectively."*

In 2026, more than 650 start-ups will contribute to the exhibition's innovation ecosystem, confirming SIAL Paris's role as a strategic breeding ground for the global foodtech sector.

Finally, this year, the show is offering first-time exhibitors a 9m² turnkey stand at an attractive rate, to remove barriers and enable all French companies to take the plunge, enthuses Audrey Ashworth: *"We want to remove barriers and enable SMEs and mid-market companies that have never exhibited before to get a foothold. It has never been more strategic to have an international presence."*

Real-life examples: French companies that have ventured into the export market

Many French agri-food companies demonstrate that it is possible to combine a strong local presence with international expansion. Exporting is not a detour: it is often a catalyst for organisational development, innovation and economic stability.

Fromageries Paul Dischamp –

transforming a regional heritage into global success

Winners of the Export Award presented by ANIA and SIAL Paris as part of the EY Agri-Food Award 2026, Fromageries Paul Dischamp embody this dynamic. A family-run business founded in 1911, based in Auvergne and the Ariège valleys, it continues the production and maturing of the five Auvergne PDOs. In a stable French market, the company has positioned exports as a driver of sustainable growth: by 2025, international sales will account for 10% of its turnover, with steady growth since 2023. With a presence across five continents, it adapts its product formats, distribution networks and partnerships to local requirements, whilst preserving the authenticity of its regional origins.

» **Re.Snack** – French healthy snacking set to conquer Europe

As an exhibitor at SIAL Paris 2026, Re.Snack embodies this new generation of French brands that establish their export ambitions at a very early stage. Specialising in 'healthy snacking', the company currently generates around 4% of its turnover internationally, mainly in Belgium and Switzerland. Winner of the SIAL Innovation competition in 2024, its participation in the trade fair proved to be a real catalyst: meaningful discussions, contracts signed with supermarkets in the following months, and the establishment of credibility for its export strategy. Building on this momentum, the brand intends to step up its efforts in 2026 through its presence at the trade fair, with a target of 10% exports by early 2027, prioritising the Benelux countries, Spain and Italy. SIAL Paris 2026 will also be one of the first major events for the official launch of its new brand, POP COMEDY, an innovative oil-free and no-added-sugar popcorn, aimed particularly at international markets.

Driving a collective movement at a pivotal moment for the French agri-food sector

Held under the High Patronage of the President of the Republic, the 2026 edition is part of a national strategic initiative. At the previous edition, An official dinner at the Élysée Palace brought together France's most influential exhibitors alongside major international players, highlighting the strategic importance of the trade fair in food diplomacy and France's international influence.

SIAL Paris works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, ANIA (the National Association of Food Industries), La Coopération Agricole, Business France, and the ARIA (Regional Association (the French Food Industries Federation) and sector organisations in order to boost the visibility and support available to French businesses. Whilst the trade fair acts as a catalyst for a collective movement within the French agri-food sector, no initiative can replace the commitment of the stakeholders themselves.

"It is not too late, but it is time. The food world will be in Paris this October."

"Taking part in SIAL Paris isn't just about showcasing a few products; it's about making a strategic choice. It's about deciding to take our place in the global marketplace rather than watching it evolve without us," concludes Audrey Ashworth.



Visit by Minister Annie Genevard at SIAL Paris 2024



Key takeaways

With SIAL Paris 2026 fast approaching, Audrey Ashworth is calling for a fresh push to put France back at the heart of the global food trade. The time for observation is over; now is the time for action: long a leader, France has now been overtaken by Italy at this stage of the trade fair's promotion; other countries are restructuring their sectors, investing heavily and stepping up the competition - it is time to react!

With domestic markets stabilised, exporting is no longer an option: it is a strategic choice. SIAL Paris, with 8,000 exhibitors and thousands of international buyers, offers French companies a unique springboard for growth.

In October, the food industry will gather in Paris. The question is no longer whether France has what it takes - it does - but whether it will collectively decide to make the most of it.

SIAL

ABOUT SIAL PARIS

Organised by Comexposium, SIAL Paris is the world's largest professional food trade fair, with 8,000 exhibitors expected and 400,000 products on display. Generator As a leading trade event, it offers a unique insight into the sector's trends and opportunities every two years. The event is part of the SIAL Network, the world's largest network of food and drink trade fairs, which brings together, through eleven regular events (SIAL Paris, SIAL Canada in Montreal and Toronto, SIAL China in Shanghai and Guangzhou, SIAL Interfood in Jakarta, SIAL India in Mumbai, Food & Drinks Malaysia by SIAL in Kuala Lumpur, Gourmet Selection by SIAL, the Cheese and Dairy Products Fair and Djazagro in Algiers), 17,000 exhibitors and 700,000 professionals from 205 countries. The next edition of SIAL Paris will take place from 17 to 21 October 2026 at Paris Nord Villepinte.

www.sialparis.fr

COMEXPOSIUM

ABOUT COMEXPOSIUM

Comexposium is one of the world's leading organisers of trade and consumer events. The Group organises 400 trade fairs, exhibitions, conferences and one-to-one meetings in 80 cities across 20 countries, including SIAL, the world's leading network of events for agri-food professionals; Wine Paris and Vinexpo, the world's leading network of business meetings dedicated to wines and spirits; Who's Next; Les Assises de la Cybersécurité; Foire de Paris; Retromobile, the Salon Mondial du Chocolat and the Salons de l'Étudiant.

Comexposium fosters communities of professionals and enthusiasts around the world through an omnichannel strategy tailored to the real needs of its customers. The Group, headquartered in Courbevoie (Île-de-France), employs 1,200 staff across its various subsidiaries.

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