

# Jacques Vernin - President, FACOPHAR Santé

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24.05.2024

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*FACOPHAR Santé is the French association for actors operating in the natural and herbal remedies field. In conversation with PharmaBoardroom, long-term president Jacques Vernin explains how the organisation promotes French excellence in botanicals and highlights two important new initiatives: an FDA GMP certification programme which has opened up fresh export markets for French manufacturers and a Europe-wide natural molecule database that stands to supercharge R&D in the field.*

## **French Dietary Supplements: Going Global**

France is a global country of note in the cosmetics space as home to well-established companies like L'Oréal, LVMH and Chanel. It also boasts a significant food supplement industry, but until recently French manufacturers lacked the regulatory accreditation to tap into key global markets outside of Europe. In North and South America, the Middle East and Asia, imported food supplements require a certificate of compliance to US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP).

To resolve this issue, FACOPHAR Santé recently established an FDA GMP Diploma of Certification of Compliance for French manufacturers with a straightforward three-step process to obtain it. "This is already having a significant impact on our industry, with French companies now exporting food supplements to the US, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam," proclaims Vernin. "In 2022, French food

supplement exports grew by 20 percent to over EUR 2.5 billion, and our initiative has certainly made a major contribution to this growth.”

## **A Cosmetics Molecule Database for Europe**

As well as opening up market opportunities downstream, FACOPHAR Santé has also been working on bolstering the capacity for research and development in the natural products field. Especially since the EU brought in a ban on animal testing for cosmetics back in 2013, the industry has had to come up with novel means to conduct R&D for new products.

A significant recent breakthrough has been the establishment of the NCSTOX database. Led by Europe-wide association UNITIS and with the strong support of FACOPHAR Santé, NCSTOX allows for toxicity testing of over 25,000 molecules. As with the vast databases and data lakes that global biopharmaceutical R&D is increasingly reliant on, NCSTOX could be a gamechanger for innovation in the natural product space. “NCSTOX provides the cosmetic community with animal-free safe levels of use for any natural molecule,” says Vernin. He adds that the database “opens innovation for new natural ingredients and responds to the enthusiasm of consumers for natural products and a high expectation for their safety.”

Current industry sponsors that are already making use of NCSTOX include Alban Muller International, Greentech, Lucas Meyer cosmetics, IES Labo, Pilege, Prod’hyg, Provital, SBM Development, SEPPIC, Pierre Fabre dermo-cosmétique, Sequens, LVMH, Sisley, and Chanel.

## **Time for Optimism**

Drawing on the successes of these two initiatives and of market trends in the cosmetics and supplements industries more broadly, Vernin is highly optimistic for the future. “With the global cosmetic and food supplement industries growing significantly, France has a major opportunity to contribute to health and wellness around the world,” he opines. “At FACOPHAR Santé we will continue to leverage our expertise in everything from food resilience to the use of marine resources, biodiversity, and producing innovative cosmetics to make this happen.”

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