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True progress in healthcare is not only about providing treatments but about fostering a culture of prevention and well-being.

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Cooper Pharma, with its 90-year legacy, is at the forefront of transforming the pharmaceutical landscape in the Middle East. From localizing production in Saudi Arabia to pioneering collaborations with global institutions, the company is driving innovation in a rapidly evolving market. As Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 reshapes the future of healthcare in the Kingdom, Cooper Pharma's strategic moves are setting the stage for what's next in the industry.

What have been Cooper Pharma's key milestones, and how has the company evolved over the years?

With a legacy spanning more than 90 years, Cooper Pharma has established itself as a leading player in the pharmaceutical industry, operating nine manufacturing plants across Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Over the decades, the company has expanded its workforce to 1,600 employees, including 400 medical and pharmaceuticals representatives, while achieving fullgender parity. Notably, two-thirds of its 170 senior managers are women, a testament to the company's meritocratic culture.

A defining milestone in recent years has been Cooper Pharma's expansion in Saudi Arabia. After more than a decade of market presence through joint ventures, the company took a significant step by acquiring a state-of-the-art pharmaceutical facility formerly owned by Sanofi. This move

has strengthened its localization efforts and deepened its commitment to diversity, with Saudi women comprising 78 percent of the plant’s workforce. The transformation unfolding in the country, particularly the growing role of women in its economic landscape, has been remarkable.

Recognizing Saudi Arabia’s strategic significance, I have personally settled in the region with my family, to further embed Cooper Pharma’s presence and drive its continued growth in this dynamic market.

How has Cooper Pharma’s global strategy evolved, and what distinguishes its collaborative approach?

Collaboration is embedded in Cooper Pharma’s DNA, shaping both its growth and strategic direction. While we are a pharmaceutical industrial player, we are fully oriented to market access, medical and scientific information, as well as pharmacy sales and promotion.

Over the years, the company has deepened its partnerships with multinational pharmaceutical firms, providing specialized services such as market access, medical and pharmacy promotion, distribution as well as contract manufacturing (CMO). These alliances have reinforced Cooper Pharma’s position as a trusted regional partner, enabling global companies to expand their footprint in key markets while benefiting from localized expertise.

Beyond traditional licensing agreements, or promotional and distribution partnerships, Cooper Pharma has taken a more integrated approach, co-investing in joint ventures to build long-term, sustainable collaborations. This strategy has been successfully implemented in Morocco over the past years and is now being extended to Saudi Arabia, where the company recently acquired a major pharmaceutical facility with significant expansion capacity. Currently, two projects are underway for this site, each focused on specialized pharmaceutical technologies, further strengthening Cooper Pharma’s role in innovation and local manufacturing.

As multinational pharmaceutical companies adapt their business models—shifting from direct subsidiaries to distribution-based frameworks in emerging markets—Cooper Pharma has become a preferred partner in managing this transition. Whether through full acquisitions or strategic collaborations, the company plays a key role in overseeing mature product portfolios while ensuring a seamless continuity of operations for leading global players.

Our strategy is built on four key priorities. First, we are enhancing the availability of essential medicines through local production, addressing global supply chain disruptions and ensuring consistent access to critical treatments. Second, localization is not only reinforcing Saudi Arabia’s pharmaceutical self-sufficiency but also positioning the country as a hub for regional exports, reducing dependence on international supply chains. Third, we are deepening collaborations with multinational pharmaceutical companies, providing them with a strong local manufacturing and distribution partner as they refine their strategies in the region. Many global players lack dedicated production sites in Saudi Arabia, and we play a crucial role in filling this gap through contract manufacturing, licensing agreements, and co-development initiatives. Lastly, we are heavily invested in talent development, ensuring that local expertise drives this transformation. With our strong focus on training skilled pharmacists and industry leaders, we are actively contributing to the development of a highly capable and sustainable pharmaceutical workforce.

What therapeutic areas does Cooper Pharma prioritize, and what drives its success in these fields?

Cooper Pharma employs a dual approach to portfolio expansion, balancing accessibility to essential medicines with the development of high-value specialty pharmaceuticals and biotechnology. A key example is our forementioned collaboration with Sanofi, through which we acquired its Saudi manufacturing facility while continuing local production of its portfolio. This model extends to other partnerships, where we strategically acquire brands and product portfolios to enhance regional availability and ensure a stable supply of critical treatments.

Our focus spans both primary and specialty care. On one hand, we remain committed to providing widely needed therapies that ensure affordability and accessibility. On the other, we are increasingly investing in advanced treatments in fields such as oncology and autoimmune diseases, which are becoming more prevalent in the Middle East and Africa due to shifts in lifestyle, diet, and environmental factors.

What differentiates Cooper Pharma in these areas is its organizational structure, meticulously designed to align internal expertise with the complexities of distinct therapeutic fields. We have established dedicated divisions, each tailored to the specific demands of biologics, traditional pharmaceuticals, or consumer products, ensuring that each segment is developed with the specialized knowledge it requires. Additionally, we continuously attract experienced professionals from leading multinational firms, fostering an environment of knowledge exchange and innovation.

This approach not only strengthens our capabilities but also reinforces our long-term vision. Our ultimate goal is to allow our countries, from Middle East, from Africa or emerging markets to be more autonomous and to localize more.

While certain high-tech treatments will always require global sourcing, we are committed to expanding local production capabilities, reducing reliance on imports, and contributing to a more resilient healthcare infrastructure across emerging markets.

How has Cooper Pharma adapted to the shift toward specialty pharmaceuticals and biosimilars?

Recognizing the need to advance in specialty pharmaceuticals and biosimilars, Cooper Pharma took a strategic step four years ago by establishing another company in Dubai, Cooper Bioscience, as an independent entity dedicated to innovation in this field. This structure allows us to develop specialized expertise while maintaining a strong foundation in essential therapies.

Across our key markets—Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Rwanda—we have structured distinct divisions for primary and specialty care, ensuring that our portfolio aligns with local healthcare needs. While we maintain a core range of products, we adapt strategically through multinational partnerships, specialty pharma licenses, and branded generics to meet the specific demands of each market. By combining an adaptive portfolio approach with a well-defined organizational structure, we continue to strengthen our capabilities in high-value therapeutics while reinforcing our role in providing accessible healthcare solutions.

What is required in Saudi Arabia is different from what is required in Morocco or in Spain. This is why we always ensure to have a core portfolio and then adaptations to support local needs either from our own products which are branded generics or from our partners portfolio from in-licensing or promotion deals.

How is Cooper Pharma positioning itself within Saudi Arabia's healthcare transformation, and what role will it play in the coming years?

Since entering the Saudi market 12 years ago, Cooper Pharma has prioritized localization, adopting a dual strategy that combines an independent commercial team with a strategic joint venture with a leading Saudi pharmaceutical company, Saudi Pharmaceutical Industries and Medical Appliances

Corporation (SPIMACO).

Since day one, we have played by the rules, ensuring that all our products are locally manufactured. Unlike many companies that initially relied on imports, we fully embraced Saudi Arabia’s industrial vision, reinforcing our identity as a Saudi company with a locally led team and a Saudi general manager.

And to grow more, we need partnerships again and this is why, today, our products are manufactured across four different sites, in Saudi. The recent integration of the Sanofi facility has further strengthened our manufacturing footprint, allowing us to produce 15 million units for Sanofi and other multinational partners while continuing to manufacture our own portfolio in various sites.

Currently, in Saudi Arabia, only 25 percent of country’s pharmaceutical needs are met through local production, with 75 percent still imported. Over the next five years, we expect localization to rise to 50 percent, and we, as Cooper Pharma Saudi, are committed to driving this shift by expanding our manufacturing capacity to support a greater share of the country’s demand.

As one of the top 15 pharmaceutical markets globally, Saudi Arabia is a highly competitive landscape, attracting significant multinational interest. To reinforce our position, we are introducing two advanced pharmaceutical technologies that have never been produced locally. These innovations, set to launch next year, will complement our existing Galenic formulations and further differentiate Cooper Pharma in an evolving market. By continuously expanding capabilities and introducing cutting-edge technologies, we are not only strengthening our competitive edge but also contributing to Vision 2030’s goal of building a self-sufficient and innovation-driven pharmaceutical sector.

Beyond meeting domestic demand, Saudi Arabia’s dominant position in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) pharmaceutical sector makes it a natural hub for exports. The country accounts for 60 percent of the GCC market, and when we manufacture under license, multinational companies often extend regional export rights to us, further strengthening our reach. Additionally, Saudi Arabia’s growing trade relationships with Southeast Asia and other global markets are creating further opportunities for expansion. To maximize efficiency and long-term sustainability, we apply a center-of-excellence model, strategically concentrating production in key locations to optimize scale, reduce costs, and enhance the region’s pharmaceutical resilience.

How is Cooper Pharma leveraging global partnerships to drive innovation?

Pharmaceutical innovation requires immense investment, often beyond the reach of mid-sized players. Rather than competing directly with large multinationals, we have built a strategy centered on partnerships with leading academic institutions, such as MIT, Stanford, and the Pasteur Institute, along with startups and specialty pharma companies, positioning Cooper Pharma as a gateway to the Middle East and Africa. These collaborations enable us to either co-invest early in the development process or introduce cutting-edge therapies to the region once they are market ready.

Beyond fostering innovation, these collaborations help attract highly skilled professionals with international experience back to their home countries, reinforcing local expertise while maintaining strong global ties. This approach mirrors our efforts in Morocco, where returning talent is strengthening the research ecosystem and driving scientific progress. As we say in Morocco, one hand cannot applaud alone—advancing pharmaceutical innovation is a collaborative effort, and we remain committed to bridging global expertise with regional development.

How would you assess Saudi Arabia’s regulatory framework, and how has Cooper Pharma navigated it?

The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (Saudi FDA) has built a regulatory framework that stands as a model of efficiency and sophistication. Drawing on global best practices, it combines structure, responsiveness, and industry expertise, ensuring clear and effective engagement with pharmaceutical companies. Beyond regulatory oversight, the Saudi FDA plays a pivotal role in safeguarding public health, recognizing that medicines are not just products but essential to patient well-being.

What sets the Saudi FDA apart is its proactive stance on innovation and localization. It has introduced targeted initiatives to attract investment, support branded generics, and foster pharmaceutical development. A standout example is the Value-Added Medicine (VAM) guideline, which allows companies to present new concepts and engage in structured discussions to define approval pathways—an approach rarely seen in the region. From an investment standpoint, our experience in Saudi Arabia has been exceptionally positive. The strong alignment between regulatory and political authorities has created a highly supportive environment, encouraging innovation while upholding rigorous safety and quality standards. This progressive approach positions Saudi Arabia as a leader in regulatory excellence within the region.

How does Cooper Pharma foster a strong organizational culture, and what qualities do you seek in new employees?

At Cooper Pharma, people are the foundation of our success. No system, technology, nor artificial intelligence can replace human leadership, decision-making, and execution. While many companies in our region follow a centralized, family-owned model, we believe that true commitment comes from empowerment, accountability, and a sense of ownership. Employees go beyond expectations when they feel genuinely invested in the company's success. That is why we emphasize transparency, shared responsibility, and performance-based rewards. My role as Chairman and CEO is to create an environment where talent flourishes, allowing individuals to take initiative and push the company forward in ways even leadership may not anticipate.

This philosophy extends to how we build our team. Diversity is a key driver—not just in gender, as we moved past that conversation long ago, but in culture, expertise, and perspective. Our workforce represents 25 to 30 nationalities, bringing together professionals from different backgrounds whose collective insights fuel innovation. The most groundbreaking ideas emerge when people with varied experiences and ways of thinking collaborate, creating new opportunities.

Beyond diversity, we seek professionals with an entrepreneurial mindset—individuals who take ownership, think independently, and contribute meaningfully rather than merely executing tasks. We also prioritize expertise in critical functions such as compliance, corporate social responsibility, and sustainability. These areas have become central to our operations, led by industry veterans with decades of experience. At Cooper Pharma, we are not just hiring employees; we are shaping the next generation of leaders who will drive the company and the industry into the future.

What is Cooper Pharma's vision for the future, and how will its role evolve in the coming years?

Cooper Pharma's vision is anchored in a commitment to long-term impact, extending beyond financial success or industry recognition. With a 92-year legacy, the company continues to evolve, shaping healthcare by expanding access to high-quality medicines, investing in talent, strengthening collaborations with healthcare professionals, and supporting patients beyond pharmaceuticals through education and awareness. True progress in healthcare is not only about providing treatments but also about fostering a culture of prevention and well-being. If we can contribute to greater public awareness of the importance of nutrition, sleep, and exercise, we are actively supporting better health outcomes. A society that prioritizes well-being ultimately reduces

its dependence on medication, and that is a success in itself.

Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 aligns seamlessly with this philosophy, driving a transformation that is both ambitious and tangible. The scale and speed of change in the country are remarkable, and it is a privilege for us to contribute, no matter how small our role may be. Beyond business, Saudi Arabia holds deep cultural significance for us, and witnessing its evolution—particularly the increasing leadership of Saudi professionals in shaping the future—is truly inspiring. Our ambition is to continue supporting this momentum by strengthening partnerships, fostering innovation, and contributing to a more sustainable and advanced healthcare ecosystem for the region.

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