

Case studies - France

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Due diligence legislation in France

Key law: Duty of Vigilance Law (Loi sur le devoir de vigilance)

- **Adopted** : March 20 17 (one of the first mandatory HRDD laws globally)
 - **Applies to** :
 - French companies with $\geq 5,000$ employees in France, or
 - $\geq 10,000$ employees worldwide (including subsidiaries)
 - **Objective** : Prevent human rights abuses and environmental harm within a company's own operations and across global supply chains.
 - Civil liability for failure to comply
 - Injunctions and damages possible through court action
 - NGOs and trade unions may initiate legal proceedings
- > Influenced the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CD3D)



Due diligence legislation in France

Core requirements

- Develop and publish a **Vigilance Plan** :
 - Risk mapping (Human rights and fundamental freedoms, the health and safety of individuals, as well as the environment)
 - Procedures to assess suppliers and subcontractors
 - Preventive measures
 - Alert and whistleblowing mechanisms
 - Monitoring and evaluation system
- Annual public disclosure (often in the company's management report)



UpCoop



Upccoop



Overview of Up Coop

Who they are:

- Founded in 1964, **UpCoop** is a French *SCOP* (société coopérative et participative) and the parent company of the **Up Group**, active in 25 countries.
- Entirely **employee -owned**, with governance rooted in **democratic participation**.

Mission -driven identity:

- Became the first **SCOP à mission (mission-driven business)** in 2023.
- Mission (raison d'être): *"Cooperate sustainably for purchasing power with social and local utility."*

Key features:

- Strong social values: inclusivity, transparency, reinvestment.
- 100% of capital held by employees.



Corporate Sustainability and Social Dialogue

Sustainability strategy:

Structured around 5 CSR pillars:

- **Democratic governance**
- **Economic responsibility**
- **Social responsibility**
- **Societal engagement**
- **Environmental stewardship**

Key achievements:

- 85% of the electricity consumed in offices comes from renewable sources
- 78% of services digitalised.
- 2.4MEUR allocated to community-driven initiatives since 2017.
- EcoVadis Gold certification: ethical governance and transparency
- 7,8% of employees are people with disabilities

Social dialogue:

- Quarterly employee assemblies.
- Trade union representation on the board.
- Employees become co-owners after 1 year.



Challenges, strategies and lessons learned

Challenges:

- Competing with agile private firms
- Upholding cooperative values globally
- Managing digitalisation's environmental trade-offs

Strategies and actions:

- ESG integration across all operations
- Investing in employee development
- Aligning with CSRD for sustainability reporting
- Mission committee to ensure impact

Lessons learned:

- Democratic governance strengthens long-term resilience
- Sustainability needs top-level leadership
- Social economy models are scalable and competitive if grounded in core values

For more information





Sodiaal



SODIAAL



Overview of Sodiaal

Who they are:

- Founded in 1964, **Sodiaal** is **France's largest dairy cooperative** , owned by ~15,300 dairy farmers.
- Covers **20% of France's milk production** , with 50 production sites and 9,000+ employees.
- Brands include **Yoplait** , **Candia** , and **Entremont** ; exports to 20+ countries.

Cooperative structure:

- Operates on a “**one member, one vote** ” basis.
- Two-thirds of annual profits redistributed to farmer-members; one-third reinvested.
- Since 2020, employees can become members (26% by 2023, aiming for 50% by 2024).



Sustainability and Social Dialogue

Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence (CSDD):

- Aligned with Science Based Targets: aims for 30 % carbon reduction by 2030.
- Prioritises “fair” farmer remuneration, biodiversity protection, and water use reduction (target: -40 % by 2030).
- Publishes annual sustainability reports and engages in third-party audits.

Social dialogue:

- Deeply embedded through cooperative governance and employee-shareholder integration.
- Employees and farmers contribute to decision-making via boards, assemblies, and regional councils.
- Regular training, meetings, and climate adaptation discussions with members.



Challenges, strategies and lessons learned

Key challenges:

- Generational renewal: 50 % of farmers to retire within 10 years
- Climate change, market volatility, and evolving EU due diligence regulations
- Maintaining cooperative values while scaling and competing globally

Strategic actions:

- Sustainability Bonus and "Route du Lait" programme to promote responsible farming
- Investment in renewable energy, digitalisation, and premium product lines
- Reacquisition of Yoplait and launch of “Marques de Respect” to strengthen cooperative identity

Lessons learned:

- Democratic governance ensures resilience
- Sustainability and fair pricing can coexist with competitiveness
- A cooperative model enhances long-term viability and stakeholder trust

For more information



BioCoop





Overview of BioCoop

Who they are:

- Founded in 1986, **Biocoop** is France's **largest organic and fair-trade retail cooperative**, uniting 750+ independently owned shops.
- Operates under a **cooperative public limited company** model with variable capital.
- Built on **democratic governance**, collective ownership, and a commitment to local, organic and ethical trade.

Organisational model:

- Stores remain independent but align with a shared **ethical charter** covering sourcing, governance, and environmental standards.
- Governance includes store owners, employees, producers and consumers—all contributing to strategic decisions.



Corporate Sustainability and Social Dialogue

Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence

(CSDD):

- Target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 25% by 2030.
- 71% of logistics fleet powered by biogas (2023).
- 35.4% of products sold without single-use packaging; target: 50% by 2025.
- 25.7% of non-fresh sales from fair trade goods; €960k distributed to farmers in 2023.

Governance:

- Entreprise à Mission status embeds environmental/social goals into corporate structure.
- Participatory governance with a strong emphasis on transparency and accountability.

Social dialogue:

- Decentralised model has led to inconsistencies in labour practices.
- Strikes in 2021 highlighted challenges with wage disparities and representation.
- Ongoing improvements include regular assemblies and labour standardisation efforts.



Challenges, strategies and lessons learned

Key challenges:

- Growth has led to labour tensions and governance inconsistencies across stores
- Competitive pressure from conventional retailers entering the organic market
- Maintaining cooperative identity while scaling a decentralised business model

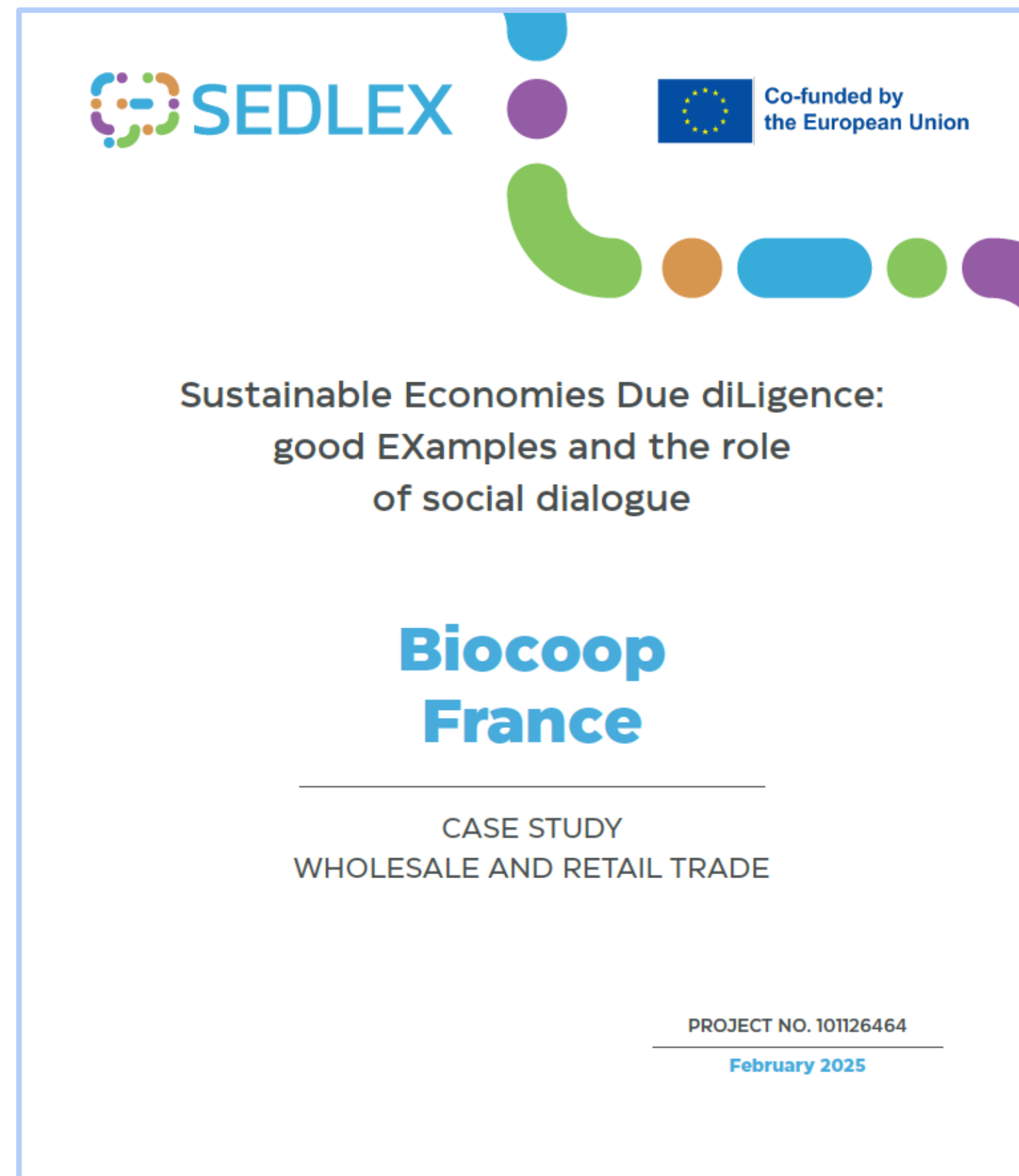
Strategic actions:

- Sustainable sourcing and logistics; seasonal and local products prioritised
- Employee training, wage gap limits (max 1:5), and fair employment policies
- Social programmes include donations of 80,000 products and €100,000 in food aid (2023)

Lessons learned:

- Strong values can drive ethical business, but uniform standards are needed to ensure consistency
- Decentralised cooperatives must balance autonomy with accountability
- Embedding sustainability in governance —not just operations —builds resilience and trust

For more information





Thank you!

