

**PRESS KIT**

**RESEARCH, INNOVATION,  
DEVELOPMENT OF BEL**

**30**  
**YEARS**

**AT THE WORLD RID CENTRE IN  
VENDÔME FOR THE FOOD OF THE FUTURE**



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**B**y 2050, we will need to feed 10 billion people while respecting planetary boundaries. This challenge makes innovation in the agri-food sector more essential than ever, to balance growing needs with resource preservation, without compromising the nutritional value, taste, or accessibility of our food. At Bel, this commitment shapes our vision for sustainable food. Innovation has always been at the heart of Bel's strategy. A key milestone was the creation of the single-serving portion—an innovation that has become the Group's DNA. This revolutionary, practical, and economical breakthrough transformed the consumption of dairy and fruit products. For some of our iconic products, like The Laughing Cow®, this success emerged from a historic synergy between the dairy industry and the micro-mechanical craftsmanship of the Jura region. This innovation paved the way for global success: more than 20 million portions of The Laughing Cow® are produced daily and distributed across 120 countries.

Our Vendôme RID center embodies our global Research, Innovation, and Development strategy. At Bel, innovation extends beyond developing new products; it encompasses recipe refinement, packaging and process optimization, and food chain decarbonization. We are constantly working to enhance the nutritional quality and environmental impact of our products to offer healthier choices for consumers. Our research also focuses on

alternative proteins from fermentation and the development of sustainable packaging to deliver products that are better for the planet.

Today, our Vendôme Research, Innovation, and Development center celebrates 30 years of innovation. At the forefront of food and environmental transitions, it stands out for its ability to combine Bel's historical expertise with exploration into new horizons. In partnership with start-ups, universities, and researchers worldwide, our teams are developing the future of dairy, plant-based, and fruit-based foods. These individuals are vital to achieving our mission: to provide healthy, sustainable, and accessible food for all.

At Bel, we firmly believe that the future of food lies in innovation. This is why the Group is investing 7.5 million euros over the next three years at the Vendôme site to accelerate research and development, ensuring that Bel remains a leader in responsible innovation.

**CÉCILE BÉLIOT, ,**

Chief Executive Officer Bel Group



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**B**el's sustainable growth relies on our ability to anticipate and meet consumer needs worldwide while embedding responsible practices that place innovation at the core of our strategy. At Bel, our iconic brands, such as The Laughing Cow®, Kiri®, and Babybel®, continue to reinvent themselves to offer new consumption experiences that are aligned with evolving tastes and expectations around nutrition and sustainability.

Our Vendôme Research, Innovation, and Development center embodies this commitment to transforming our products and processes. For 30 years, it has brought together passionate teams exploring tomorrow's solutions—from alternative ingredients to sustainable packaging, along with ongoing recipe improvement to enhance nutritional quality and reduce their environmental footprint. This site is a

cornerstone of our strategy, not only for developing products that are more planet-friendly but also for strengthening the bond between our brands and consumers by offering healthy, delicious, and accessible food.

Through a continuous approach of innovation and renovation, we carry forward our mission of creating positive and sustainable food. Every day, we work to make Bel a leading player in food that combines pleasure, nutrition, and environmental respect.

**BÉATRICE DE NORAY,**

Group Chief Growth Officer at Bel Group



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**A**t Bel, we have a clear vision: to reinvent food to meet consumer expectations while addressing the urgent need to protect the environment. Our iconic brands are constantly evolving to embody this dual commitment to quality and sustainability. At the heart of this transformation is our global Research, Innovation, and Development center in Vendôme. Here, our teams push the boundaries of nutrition by exploring innovative solutions such as plant-based proteins, precision fermentation, and biomass-derived proteins. Our mission? To invent the product experiences of tomorrow, transform production methods, and discover ingredients and materials that will reduce our environmental footprint. This unique site reflects our unwavering commitment to providing healthy, sustainable,

and accessible food for all. We are determined to harmonizing pleasure, nutrition, and respect for the planet, ensuring that each Bel product addresses today's food challenges .

**DELPHINE CHATELIN,**

Vice President of Research, Innovation, and Development at Bel Group



# PRESENTATION OF THE VENDÔME SITE

## A HUB FOR FOOD

## INNOVATION

For 30 years, Bel's Research, Innovation, and Development center in Vendôme has stood out for its commitment to promoting safe, healthy, and responsible food. The mission of its teams is to ensure food safety while continuously enhancing product quality and formulation, all while balancing **taste, nutrition, and sustainability**.

At the core of this mission are nearly **80 professionals** with diverse expertise in fields such as biochemistry, microbiology, genetic engineering, and dairy technology. Together, are pushing the boundaries of food innovation, addressing tomorrow's global challenges, including the task of feeding 10 billion people by 2050.



### KEY FIGURES

**30 YEARS**

years of Bel's Research, Innovation, and Development (RID) center in Vendôme

**50 000**

lab analyses conducted per year in the Vendôme site

**2 100**

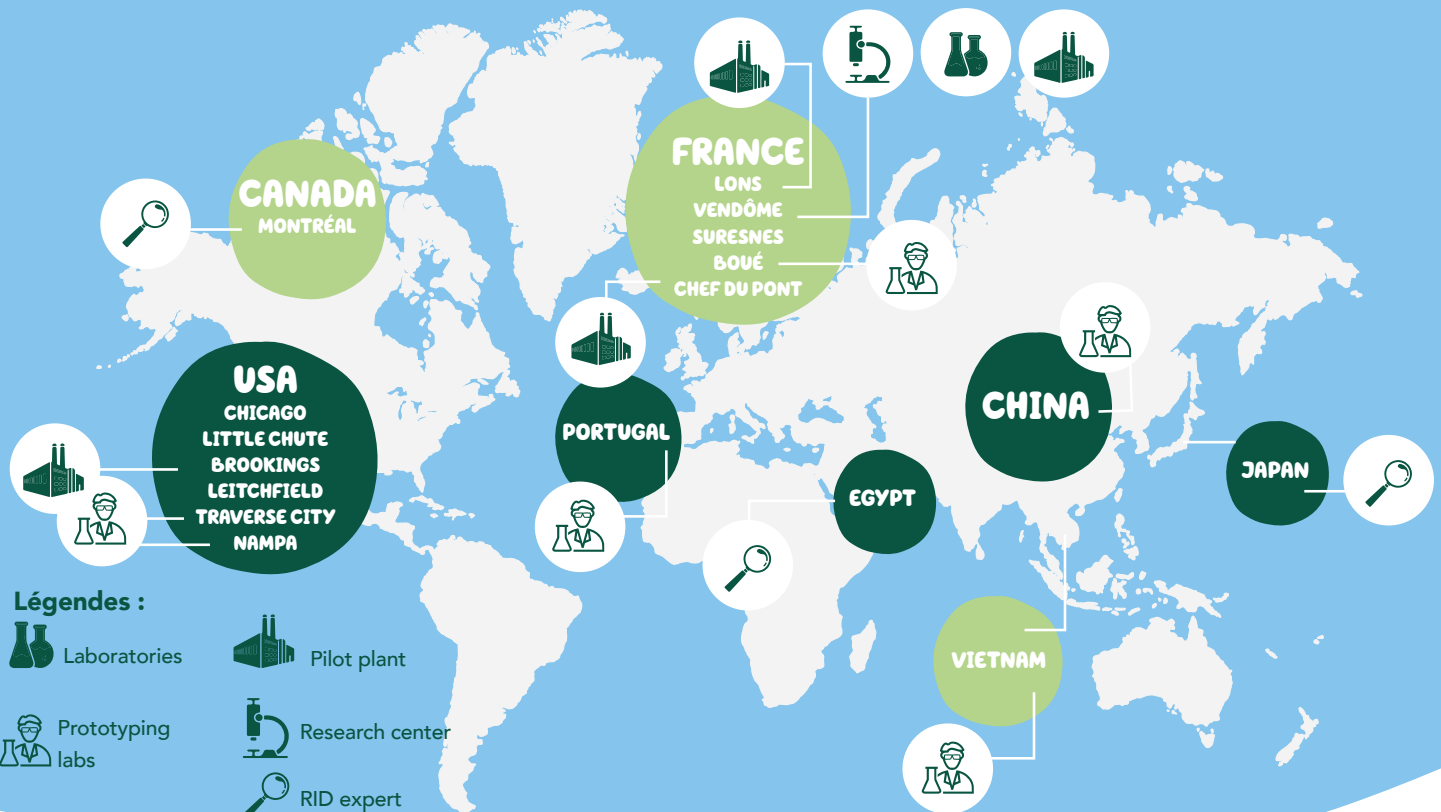
recipes tested annually in the

  
**N°1**  
Bel, in number of annual product innovations



## INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF RID CENTRES

Over time, Bel has developed an international network of RID hubs, located in strategic regions to maximize the global impact of the company. The main sites are in **France, the United States, and China**, each contributing to our mission with innovative projects tailored to local needs. This network provides the RID teams with an international framework, allowing them to be closer to the local needs of our consumers and to develop innovative and tailored solutions.





The RID team brings together specialists across various fields, from nutrition, microbiology, and product formulation, to packaging technologies and analytical expertise. Covering over fifteen specialized disciplines, each team member **offers unique expertise to the common goal of shaping the food of tomorrow.**

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Every day, I work closely with the marketing teams from different regions around the world to understand consumer expectations and create product experiences that meet their needs. What I love most is creating: new textures, new flavors, and collaborating with engineering and factory teams to define the best processes that will allow us to launch these innovations to our markets as quickly as possible.

**JESSICA HUCHET,**

MiniBabybel® Development Manager



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I've been at Bel for over 30 years and have lived through many exciting experiences. Today, I'm in charge of the pilot workshops in Vendôme. The pilot plant is a mini-factory where we test a multitude of recipes, manufacturing processes, and production conditions. We develop new machines and discover the properties of new ingredients. What's particularly exciting is being at the interface with the research and development teams to create innovations and tasting the products before anyone else!



**CHRISTIAN LE DREFF,**

Pilot Workshops Manager at the Vendôme site

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My job is to protect our products from contaminating microorganisms. To do this, I work with both the 'bad' and 'good' microorganisms: I get to know the 'bad' ones to anticipate their presence and development using predictive microbiology, and I combat them by exploring, for example, the countless benefits of good bacteria, such as cultures and probiotics.

**ÉMILIE GAUVRY,**

Researcher in Microbiology



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My role is to characterize the sensory perceptions (appearance, texture, and taste) of the products we develop or those already on the market. We create sensory profiles, which are like identity cards for our products: what are the intensities of the melting texture, saltiness, dairy, or cheesy notes? It is through these sensory profiles that we better understand the preferences and feedback from consumers in different countries. I am, in a way, the cornerstone of decisions about the taste and texture of our products.



**CHRISTOPHE BERANGER,**

Consumer Experience Technician and Sensory



# ACCELERATING INNOVATION

## 5 YEARS OF SUCCESS!

Vendôme has seen a significant acceleration in its innovation projects, marked by three major achievements that are shaping the future of food.

## PLANT-BASED INNOVATIONS

In partnership with the Avril, Lallemand, and Protial groups, Bel is advancing the development of fermented or aged plant-based products, as well as substitutes for various cheese categories through the Cocagne project. This innovative research and development project, with a collective investment of €9 million over 3 years, focuses on creating unique nutritional offerings that are healthy, environmentally friendly, minimally processed, and made from agricultural raw materials. By focusing on fermentation and aging processes, this project seeks to elevate the consumer experience that meets their demands for taste, texture, and naturalness. A flagship initiative for Bel, born in the Vendôme site, this project has received support from BPI France as part of the France 2030 initiative. By promoting innovative plant-based products, Bel aims to meet the growing consumer demand for healthy, flavorful, and environmentally friendly alternatives, aiming for a 50% dairy, 50% fruit and plant-based product offering balance.



## FERMENTATION-DERIVED PROTEINS

Bel's research has established two key partnerships with Standing Ovation, a French startup working on milk casein obtained through precision fermentation, and the U.S. based SuperBrewed, developing biomass protein. In 2022, Bel had already launched a cream cheese under the Nurishh® brand, which contains a precision fermentation protein produced by Perfect Day in the United States. This technology allows for the creation of proteins identical to those in traditional milk but with a reduced environmental footprint, offering a balanced alternative to traditional products. This complements the offering of the Nurishh® brand, which provides a range of **100% plant-based products** meeting the needs of vegetarian and flexitarian consumers looking for dietary diversity, sustainability, and the full cheese experience.

## PAPER PORTION

Another major innovation is the development of a paper-based portion pack, a sustainable packaging solution currently under-development, using new technology and materials on a production line installed at the Sablé sur Sarthe plant. This project offers an eco-friendly alternative to traditional aluminum packaging.



Our Research, Innovation, and Development (RID) strategy is based on three foundational pillars, which enable Vendôme to position itself as a pioneering site. This approach ensures that we integrate breakthrough innovations, meet the needs of all our consumers, and commit to environmental responsibility within our vision for sustainable food.



**ANNE PITKOWSKI,**

Director of Research & Applications at Bel Group

## 3 STRATEGIC PILLARS AT THE CORE OF VENDÔME'S OPERATIONS

### INNOVATION AND REVITALIZATION OF BEL'S CORE BRANDS

The Vendôme RID center focuses part of its efforts on renewing Bel's historic brands, guided by a clear ambition: to offer more natural, healthier, and more sustainable products that align with consumers' current desire for taste satisfaction.

To meet these expectations, the Bel Group, in collaboration with the Vendôme RID center, is constantly reinventing itself by creating bold concepts that combine innovative ingredients to deliver original and unique taste experiences.

### L'AMBITION DE BEL SE DÉPLOIE AUSSI À L'INTERNATIONAL, ILLUSTRÉE PAR PLUSIEURS INITIATIVES MARQUANTES :

- In the United States, the GoGo SqueeZ® brand meets the needs of children and parents alike, offering healthy, convenient products. In 2024, GoGo SqueeZ® Active will launch, providing a source of ACE vitamin for post-activity recovery.
- In China and Japan, Bel supports bakery and beverage industries with Kiri®, offering product ranges that will be used in drinks such as coffee and tea, as well as indulgent offerings like cheesecakes and ice creams.



- In the U.S. and Europe, a plant-based recipe of the Laughing Cow has been introduced, with flavors including plain, garlic & herbs, and soon chili, catering to consumers seeking dairy-free options.

## EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF FOOD

Bel envisions the food of tomorrow as healthy, balanced, and accessible to all—a vision the Vendôme center works toward by innovating for consumers' well-being. The goal is to support healthier eating, integrating solutions that address evolving nutritional needs.

### THE LAUGHING COW®

A core focus at Vendôme RID center is enhancing the nutritional improvement of recipes. This evolution is reflected in the reduction of ingredients like salt or fat, without compromising on taste or quality. This continuous improvement process can be seen in the history of The Laughing Cow®.



**2019**

Launch of 'BIG 4' in Morocco, Algeria, the Middle East and Vietnam, fortification with 4 essential nutrients to meet the main local deficiencies (zinc, iodine, iron, vitamin A or D)



Launch of The Laughing Cow® organic in Europe



**2020**

**2022**

Renovation Pik & Croq'® Europe with less salt and fat Salt 1.5 to 1.3% Fat 15.5 to 13 Fat 15.5% to 13  
Complies with the nutritional criteria established by WHO Europe to guide marketing to children



Fat reduction in The Laughing Cow® Original Spain/Portugal : 17% to 12.5% (-26%), making it the lowest-fat processed cheese on the market (excluding low-fat)



**2024**

### KIRI®

Kiri®, for its part, represents a landmark achievement in simplifying recipes after ten years of research, with a formula free from additives now accessible to all. Kiri® is also committed to nutritional improvement, with products containing up to 20% less fat and enriched with calcium.

Finally, the Vendôme RID center is actively exploring the proteins of tomorrow, aiming for a significant reduction in the environmental impact of its products while offering high-quality and accessible protein. Bel is committed to discovering new protein sources by exploring possibilities offered by nature, particularly through microorganisms and plants, to produce complete proteins or even those identical to animal proteins. Proteins from fermentation and plant-based sources offer promising alternatives, enabling Bel to contribute to a more sustainable future with a reduced carbon and water footprint.

**2019**

A simplified recipe using only dairy ingredients, water, ferments and a pinch of salt!



Reducing additives



**2020**

**2021**

Launch of new products



Simplified recipe with just 4 ingredients



**2022**

**2023**



Launch of additive-free whipped Kiri®



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## REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Aware of the environmental urgency, Bel Group has made reducing its ecological footprint a key strategic focus. This commitment reflects the group's determination to transform its processes and products to make them more respectful of the planet.

At Vendôme, efforts to reduce the impact of packaging, food waste, and production processes come to life through bold, long-term innovations.

The group is rethinking the packaging materials for its products, focusing on eco-responsible alternatives. For example, to replace plastic and aluminum packaging, Bel has developed fully recyclable paper-based packaging, a significant step towards sourcing renewable packaging materials that reduces the environmental footprint and aligns with consumers' environmental values.

Fighting food waste is also central to Bel's strategy. The individual portion offers the right amount, excellent preservation without the need for refrigeration, and is a convenient format. This approach ensures products are consumed without any waste.



# COLLABORATIONS TO SUPPORT THE FOOD TRANSITION



## SUPERBREWED

is a **U.S.-based start-up** that develops biomass proteins through fermentation. This technology provides a complete protein source with amino acids, is digestible, and can be integrated into all types of products thanks to its organoleptic qualities.

## DASSAULT SYSTÈMES

By **partnering with Dassault Systèmes**, Bel's RID takes the digitalization route across its entire food value chain, from product ideation to market launch. This collaboration accelerates our business, using cutting-edge technologies by utilizing cutting-edge technologies like digital twins and artificial intelligence.



To transform and support the food transition, the Vendôme RID center can rely on strategic partnerships with universities, national institutions, international experts, and innovative start-ups.

## STANDING OVATION

is a **French start-up** specializing in the production of caseins through precision fermentation. This technology enables the creation of dairy alternatives without animals, reducing the carbon footprint and water consumption while maintaining the nutritional and sensory qualities of traditional products.

## FERMENTS DU FUTUR

is a **public-private program** supported by INRAE and ANIA, with a funding of 48.3 million euros over 10 years. This partnership aims to accelerate research and innovation in fermentation and ferments, thus promoting sustainable and health-beneficial food.

The Vendôme RID center also collaborates with several prestigious academic institutions to strengthen its research and innovation capabilities. These include renowned organizations such as **INRAE, CNRS, Wageningen University in the Netherlands, McGill University in Canada, and the University of Wisconsin in the United States**. These collaborations allow Bel to benefit from the latest scientific advancements and amplify efforts to accelerate its projects.

Et d'autres partenariats comme :

● **In France:** LUBEM (University of Brittany), VET AGRO SUP, AGROPARISTECH, University of Clermont, University of Paris-Saclay, CNRS/IMMM University of Maine, Centrale Lille ENSCL, Métatoul Toulouse.

● **Internationally:**

- In Canada: INRS, McGill University, Polytech Montreal.
- In the Netherlands: Next Food Collective, NIZO, University of Amsterdam, Delft University of Technology.
- Finland: VTT.
- Sweden: Lund University.
- Belgium: University of Leuven.
- Bulgaria: University of Sofia.
- United States: CLIMAX Foods.

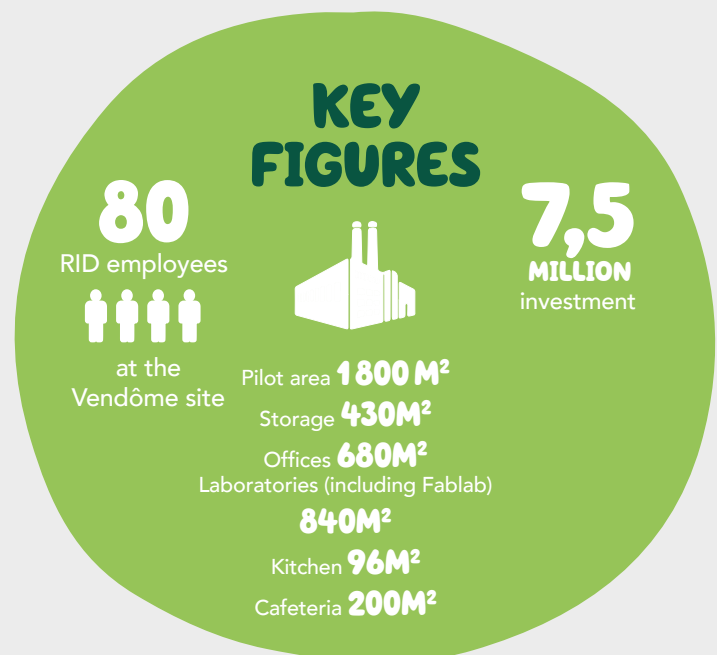
These strategic partnerships are crucial for Bel's RID, as they combine technological expertise, academic research, and industrial innovation to meet the challenges of tomorrow's food and cover the entire value chain.



## INVESTMENT PLAN OF €7.5M FOR THE VENDÔME SITE

The Group will invest **€7.5 million** over the next three years to develop the Vendôme site and accelerate its R&D efforts, allowing Bel to stay at the forefront of responsible innovation. This investment will enable:

- **Strengthening innovation capabilities** by modernizing the Vendôme infrastructure, including the redesign of pilot spaces and laboratories, the creation of expanded prototyping areas, collaborative spaces, and a zone for hosting partners to promote open innovation.
- **Improving working conditions for our teams**, with renovated offices and conference areas, allowing us to collaboratively build the food of tomorrow.





## ABOUT THE BEL GROUP

The Bel Group is a major player in the healthy snacking sector, offering a wide range of cheese, fruit, and plant-based products. With internationally recognized brands such as The Laughing Caw®, Kiri®, Babybel®, Boursin®, Nurishh®, Pom'Potes®, GoGo squeeZ®, and over 20 other local brands, Bel achieved a turnover of €3.6 billion in 2023.

With 10,800 employees across nearly 60 subsidiaries worldwide, the Group is committed to its mission: providing healthier and more responsible food for all. Its products are made in 30 production sites and are distributed in over 120 countries.

**WWW.GROUPE-BEL.COM**



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