

Starting up

- Is yoghurt a popular food in your country?
- Who typically eats it, and when?
- Read through the whole article. Then do the exercise below.

Reading 1

Read the article again to find this information about Danone.

- a) the number of employees in France
- b) the number of factories in France
- c) the number of logistics hubs in France
- d) the number of employees worldwide
- e) its French CEO
- f) when it was founded
- g) annual sales worldwide
- h) two of its competitors
- i) the amount of a recent bonus for French employees

How Danone kept making yoghurt in the pandemic

This is the story of how Danone managed the challenges of Covid-19 when it hit its home in France. It has 8,500 workers here across 13 factories, eight logistics hubs and five offices, with ties to the countryside where it picks up milk from 2,000 farmers every few days. Since the virus first hit Danone's Chinese operation in January, the food manufacturer has adapted factories to social distancing, stockpiled masks, and expanded remote working. A central crisis committee has piloted the response, applying lessons from China to new countries as the virus spread.

Not only do strained supply chains, changing consumer demands, and increased production need to be managed, so does a global staff of 105,000 stressed-out human beings dealing with their own emotions. To get through the crisis, chief executive Emmanuel Faber told his executive committee to narrow their focus. "We will operate in a radically abnormal situation for the duration of the lockdowns," he said. "Forget the three-year plan. It doesn't exist any more. Just get through the next 10 days, then the next month, and so on."

Danone's roots stretch back to the 1920s when its Spanish founder popularised yoghurt among the French as a healthy snack sold in small jars. Its bottled water, baby food and dairy brands are now mainstays on supermarket shelves. Today its €25bn of annual sales place it slightly ahead of Kraft Heinz and Mondelez. But in business circles, Danone is also known for something else: it has been known for "responsible capitalism" since 1968, when its then-CEO laid out a dual commitment to business and social progress. Mr Faber announced in a video message in mid-March that Danone would guarantee all employment contracts and wages until June 30. Employees in factories and warehouses in France would also receive a €1,000 bonus. "There is no way we can continue to supply our customers and consumers with food if our staff does not feel absolutely safe at work and secure about their jobs," he said.

The day after the announcement and 10 days into France's lockdown, Mr Faber set out by car at 7am from his Paris apartment. Over the next 14 hours and roughly 600km, he checked on how employees and operations were holding up. His first stop was a logistics platform in northern France. It had been under great strain since lockdown. As supermarkets scrambled to keep shelves stocked, they changed orders frequently and asked for deliveries to be made hours earlier than usual. The warehouse was also feeling the effects of the spike in online ordering of groceries, which was altering the mix of what supermarkets were ordering. To cope, Danone added overtime shifts and brought in temporary workers. Production was being reorganised at many of its factories to address changing consumer demand. People were opting for bigger packaging formats as they hunkered down at home. For example, Danone increased production of yoghurts in packs of 16 and reduced the number of 4-packs.



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Vocabulary – definitions

Look at these statements about things in the article. Find the words and expressions, or related words and expressions with different grammatical forms, to which they refer.

Paragraph 1

- 1 a centre from which goods are distributed (*noun* – give the singular – 9, 3)
- 2 using Skype or Zoom at home to talk to work colleagues, for example (*-ing form* – 6, 7)
- 3 build up stocks of something for future use (*verb* – give the infinitive – 9)

Paragraph 2

- 4 the situation experienced by a factory designed to produce 10,000 units an hour that is asked to produce 15,000 units, for example (*noun* – 6)
- 5 how people feel when they are asked to work in ways that affect their mental health (*-ed form + preposition* – 8, 3)
- 6 the opposite of 'ordinary' (*adj* – 8)

Paragraph 3

- 7 used to describe things many people like a lot (*adj* – 7)
- 8 the most important products in a company's product range, for example (*noun* – give the singular – 8)
- 9 a word meaning 'two' (*adj* – 4)
- 10 a type of promise (*noun* – 9)

Paragraph 4

- 11 when people are told to stay at home, avoid travelling etc (*noun* – 8)
- 12 to try to do something difficult in a short time (*verb* – give the infinitive – 8)
- 13 a sudden increase (*noun* – 5)
- 14 to change (*verb* – give the infinitive – 5)
- 15 to manage to deal with a situation, but only just (*verb* – give the infinitive – 4)
- 16 to stay somewhere to protect yourself (*phrasal verb* – give the infinitive – 6, 4)

Grammar – past simple, past continuous and past perfect simple

Look at the last paragraph from the article, which is given below. Underline all the examples of these tenses, identifying each of them. (The first one has been done for you.)

- past simple — 11 occurrences
- past continuous – 6 occurrences
- past perfect simple – 1 occurrence

The day after the announcement and 10 days into France's lockdown, Mr Faber set out [*past simple*] by car at 7am from his Paris apartment. Over the next 14 hours and roughly 600km, he checked on how employees and operations were holding up. His first stop was a logistics platform in northern France. It had been under great strain since lockdown. As supermarkets scrambled to keep shelves stocked, they changed orders frequently and asked for deliveries to be made hours earlier than usual. The warehouse was also feeling the effects of the spike in online ordering of groceries, which was altering the mix of what supermarkets were ordering. To cope, Danone added overtime shifts and brought in temporary workers. Production was being reorganised at many of its factories to address changing consumer demand. People were opting for bigger packaging formats as they hunkered down at home. For example, Danone increased production of yoghurts in packs of 16 and reduced the number of 4-packs.

Reading 2

Which of these are correct 'takeaways' from the article?

Danone, in responding to the current situation,

- a) is still concentrating on its long-term plans.
- b) has changed the way it functions.
- c) is keeping on its employees indefinitely.
- d) has stopped selling certain products.
- e) is keeping to its historical values.

Further discussion / Group work

- 1 Give examples of the ways that you and your organisation have changed the way you work or study in the current situation. Are they better or worse than what happened before? Give reasons.
- 2 Which of these will continue after the current situation is completely over? Explain your reasoning.

ANSWER KEY**Reading 1**

- a) 8,500
- b) 13
- c) 8
- d) 105,000
- e) Emmanuel Faber
- f) 1920s
- g) €25 billion
- h) Kraft Heinz, Mondelez
- i) €1,000

Vocabulary

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1 logistics hub | 9 dual |
| 2 remote working | 10 guarantee |
| 3 stockpile | 11 lockdown |
| 4 strain | 12 scramble |
| 5 stressed out | 13 spike |
| 6 abnormal | 14 alter |
| 7 popular | 15 cope |
| 8 mainstay | 16 hunker down |

Grammar

The day after the announcement and 10 days into France's lockdown, Mr Faber set out [past simple] by car at 7am from his Paris apartment. Over the next 14 hours and roughly 600km, he checked [past simple] on how employees and operations were holding up [past continuous]. His first stop was [past simple] a logistics platform in northern France. It had been [past perfect simple] under great strain since lockdown. As supermarkets scrambled [past simple] to keep shelves stocked, they changed [past simple] orders frequently and asked [past simple] for deliveries to be made hours earlier than usual. The warehouse was also feeling [past continuous] the effects of the spike in online ordering of groceries, which was altering [past continuous] the mix of what supermarkets were ordering [past continuous]. To cope, Danone added [past simple] overtime shifts and brought in [past simple] temporary workers. Production was being [past continuous] reorganised at many of its factories to address changing consumer demand. People were opting [past continuous] for bigger packaging formats as they hunkered down [past simple] at home. For example, Danone increased [past simple] production of yoghurts in packs of 16 and reduced [past simple] the number of 4-packs.

Reading 2

b) and e)

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