

TECHNOLOGY IN ACTION



Delivering quality with a lifetime guarantee and reparability



Orgalim's Technology in Action series showcases how the technology industries we represent are shaping a future that's good for Europe's economy and society – and how the right policy framework can help them do even more.

Challenge

Metals represent the highest share of waste currently exported outside the EU. Much of this is large, industrial scale waste, but metal waste occurs in many sectors.

Take cookware. Stainless steel and aluminium are durable and 100% recyclable, but more and more metal cookware is non-stick coated, and it is the coating that wears out first, causing pans to be thrown away.

This was a challenge taken on by Cristel, the leading French manufacturer of premium stainless steel cookware. But it was not the fundamental challenge that has defined the company from the start, back in the 1980s. That was, instead, quite simply, how to conserve jobs in an area with a strong industrial heritage struggling in the face of growing global competition.

Solution

The answer was to develop a product of high added value, "embodying not only premium quality but also respect for the environment and for the people who work with us and for us," says Damien Dodane, Cristel's CEO and the second generation of the family at the helm.

From the very start, he explains, "we wanted to create a product guaranteed for life and that we could be proud would be passed from generation to generation and be repairable."

Cristel uses only French stainless steel, which is already 87% recycled, and sources everything as locally as possible. It boasts 92% of the value added of its products originating in France, earning it the label 'Origin France Guaranteed'.

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We only put
non-stick
products on the
market once we
were capable
of saying, when it becomes
damaged, we will be able to
repair your pan.



Damien Dodane, CEO Cristel



Part of the quality control process

If many of its practices are circular, Mr Dodane is at pains to emphasise that this is not because it is trendy to make green claims, but because they stem from the company's core values.

Since 1992, customers can send back for repair non-stick frying pans whose coating has become damaged. That service has so far saved around 123 tonnes of metal and avoided 543 tonnes of CO₂ emissions for nearly 123,000 articles re-coated. The company has also been using 100% renewable energy since 1996, uses waste heat from its compressors to heat its workshops and has a closed loop water system, enabling it to cut its water use by 70% in two years.

Today this value-driven strategy is paying off and Cristel reports sales have doubled in the two years since Covid. Mr Dodane sees it as a clear sign that customers are increasingly expecting quality to encompass strong CSR values.

Policy implications

EU subsidies have helped Cristel renovate its factory. The main regulatory headache, says Mr Dodane, is "all the administrative work we have to do to demonstrate that we're already complying." A more level playing field would also help, he says: "It's true that sometimes it pains us to see the EU let in products that are absolutely not compatible with the environment and society and we meanwhile have a mountain of paperwork to fill out to export our sustainable products to Asia."

Related Orgalim position papers

- [Circular Economy Action Plan](#)
- [Sustainable Products Initiative](#)
- [Draft French decree on consumer information for waste-generating products](#)
- [Draft French decree on the minimum proportion of reused packaging](#)



About Cristel

Cristel is the leading French manufacturer of premium stainless steel cookware, born in 1986 out of an employee buy-out from an old industrial group. Today it is a family business with just over 100 employees and €20 million in annual sales, three-quarters in France and 25% export. The company is working to become an 'entreprise à mission' (purpose-driven company), as defined in French law.

cristel.com

Orgalim represents Europe's technology industries, comprised of 770,000 innovative companies spanning the mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and electronics, ICT and metal technology branches. Together they represent the EU's largest manufacturing sector, generating annual turnover of over €2,076 billion, manufacturing one-third of all European exports and providing 11.33 million direct jobs. Orgalim is registered under the European Union Transparency Register – ID number: 20210641335-88.