

Social Responsibility Trends in Food Industries – "DANONE Corporation as a model"

"شركة دانون نموذجاً"- اتجاهات المسؤولية الاجتماعية في مؤسسات الصناعات الغذائية

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the extent of the application of social responsibility in the food industry institutions, by focusing on their trends and strategies for dealing with them, and presented the study through a descriptive analysis of some of the activities and practices carried out by DANONE company in the field of social responsibility. The study concluded that DANONE is applying social responsibility practices to all stakeholders to achieve the interest of the Community and to support the company's reputation.

Keywords: Social Responsibility; Stakeholders; Society; Food Industry; DANONE Company.

Jel Classification Codes: M14, E4, L66.

ملخص: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على مدى تطبيق المسؤولية الاجتماعية في مؤسسات الصناعات الغذائية، من خلال التركيز على اتجاهاتها وإستراتيجيات التعامل معها، كما عرضت الدراسة من خلال دراسة تحليلية وصفية لبعض نشاطات والممارسات التي تقوم بها شركة دانون في مجال المسؤولية الاجتماعية. توصلت الدراسة إلى نتيجة مفادها أن شركة دانون تطبق ممارسات المسؤولية الاجتماعية اتجاه كافة أصحاب المصالح لتحقيق مصلحة المجتمع، ودعم سمعة الشركة. كلمات مفتاحية: مسؤولية الاجتماعية، أصحاب المصالح، مجتمع، صناعات غذائية، شركة دانون. تصنيف JEL : M14، E4، L66.

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1.INTRODUCTION:

The world is witnessing during the recent period many global developments that touched various fields such as the communications revolution, technical development and the increase in the number of institutions with the intensification of competition between them, as the social role of institutions becomes increasingly important, especially after many governments abandoned many of their economic and service roles, economic institutions aim, since their inception, to maximize their profits and achieve rewarding financial returns, regardless of their effects that may be negative on society, but in the era of globalization and with the rapid spread of information and the pressures that institutions face on the part of various pressure groups, it is imperative today to give importance for maximizing its positive impact and reduce the negative towards society and the environment, as institutions have become interested not only in shareholders but with all parties interacting with them, seeking to win them in their class, especially with increased social awareness and consumers' ability to distinguish between institutions' products according to their social performance, which explains the integration of institutions of social considerations within their strategies to achieve the goals and objectives. Among them is the DANONE Foundation, which is active in the food industry.

In light of the foregoing, the following problem can be raised:

What is the reality of DANONE's commitment to responsible practices towards its stakeholders?

Thus, in our research, we proceed from a main hypothesis that:

DANONE does not conduct any social responsibility activities toward its stakeholders.

To shed light on all aspects of the study, we decided to ask the following sub-questions:

- What is meant by social responsibility? and What is its importance?
- What are the trends of social responsibility?
- What are DANONE's CSR practices?

1.2. The importance of the study:

Social responsibility is one of the contemporary issues of the institutions, as the study derives its importance from a especially with the increasing intertwining relationship between the institution and society in light of the spread of social awareness of the institution's practices, the success of the institutions is no longer limited to their economic performance, but go to the performance Social.

1.3. Study objectives: The study aims to establish the concept of social

responsibility, while showing strategies for dealing with it and its trends, where the institution's exercise of its social role is not only the direction of the owners but also towards all stakeholders, with reference to the social responsibility practices applied by DANONE towards society.

1.4. Research Methodology: In pursuit of our study objectives, we have used the descriptive-analytical approach, which is considered a form of scientific analysis and explanation organized to describe a specific phenomenon or problem, and to classify, analyze, and subject it to a study.

1.5. Structure of the study: To address this issue and take its aspects, we decided to divide it into two axes as follows:

- The first axis: the theoretical for social responsibility.
- The second axis: the trends of social responsibility in the DANONE company.

2. Theoretical for social responsibility.

2.1. The concept of social responsibility:

The definitions provided on social responsibility varied and varied, whether by researchers or organizations. Among these definitions we mention the following:

The World Bank defined social responsibility as: "the commitment of business owners contributing to sustainable development by working with their employees, their families, civil society and society as a whole to improve the standard of living in a manner that serves trade and development at the same time." (Abou el Nassr أبو النصر & Abed el hamid عبد الحميد, 2018, p. 29)

The European Union Commission also defines it as "a concept where institutions voluntarily decide to contribute to achieving a better society and a cleaner environment, which is the concept through which institutions can achieve integration into social and environmental concerns in their commercial operations and their interaction with stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (Al-Tai الطائي, 2016, p. 23)

(Pride & Ferrell) also defines it as "the Foundation's commitment to maximizing its positive impact and minimizing its negative impact on society". (Tillmann Wagner, 2009, p. 78)

Archie B Carroll defined it as "the expectations that society awaits at a certain time in an organization and that it includes the economic, legislative, moral and discretionary aspects" (Carroll, 1999, p. 283)

(Al-Bakri) defines her as "the set of decisions and actions taken by the institution to reach to achieve the desired and prevailing goals in society, which ultimately is part of the direct economic benefits of managing the institution and seeking to achieve it as part of its strategies" (Al-Tai الطائي & Al-Dahbawi الذبحاوي, 2016, p. 224)

From the above, it can be said that social responsibility is: "Those contributions that the Foundation makes to the development of society, and it is in response to the aspirations of stakeholders to achieve their benefits and improve their lives."

2.2. The importance of social responsibility:

There are conflicting views about the institution's adoption of more social role, and on the whole, there is general agreement that the social responsibility of the institution with certain limits represents an important and beneficial process for institutions in their relations with their societies to face the criticisms and pressures imposed on them. (Alain & Jean-jacques, 2003, p. 45)

We can show several positive aspects of adopting social responsibility, the importance of which is embodied through the achieved returns for the three parties that will reap the benefit from this commitment, and we mean the society, the state, and the institution, by adopting social responsibility with respect to the institution can be shown in the following points: (Abu Al-Nasr أبو النصر, 2015, p. 42)

- The fulfillment of social responsibility is a moral issue;
- It is in the institution's interest to promote and improve the society in which it operates;
- Increase the chances of staying in front of the institution;
- Social behavior may lead to profitability;
- Maintaining existing clients and earning new ones;
- The performance of social responsibility is necessary to avoid collision with government regulations and systems;
- Contributing to improving the value of the corporation's shares in the long run, as investment risks decrease;

- Giving institutions the opportunity to solve social problems that the government has failed to address;
- Taking advantage of the financial and human resources of the institutions to solve the problems of society.

As for society, the importance of the institution adopting its social responsibility can be demonstrated in the following points: (Al-Ghalbi الغالي & Al-Amri العامري, 2016, p. 53)

- Increasing social solidarity between the various segments of society, while creating a high sense of belonging by individuals with special needs, such as persons with disabilities, those like, minorities, women, youth, and others;
- Social stability as a result of the availability of a kind of social justice and the rule of equal opportunity, which is the core of the social responsibility of institutions;
- Improving the quality of life in society, whether in terms of infrastructure or cultural aspect;
- Increased awareness of the importance of full integration between different community organizations and different interest groups;
- Improving political development based on increasing social awareness education at the level of individuals, groups and institutions, and this will contribute to political stability and a sense of social justice.

Also, fulfilling social responsibility brings several benefits to the state, including the following: (Bin Sahnoun بن سحنون, 2015, p. 49)

- Reducing the burdens incurred by the state in the performance of its health, educational, cultural and other social services and tasks;
- The commitment to social responsibility maximizes the state's revenues due to the institutions' awareness of the importance of a just and correct contribution to bear social costs;
- Contributing to technological development, eliminating unemployment and other areas that the state often finds itself unable to carry out all its

burdens away from private institutions bearing their role in this framework.

2.3. Strategies for dealing with social responsibility: dealing with social responsibility is structured in four situations or strategies that we mention in the following: (Salami & Snigra سنيقرة, 2019, p. 595)

2.3.1. Obstructionist Strategy: This strategy displays an interest in the economic priorities of enterprises without adopting any social role because it falls outside the scope of their interests that must focus on maximizing profit.

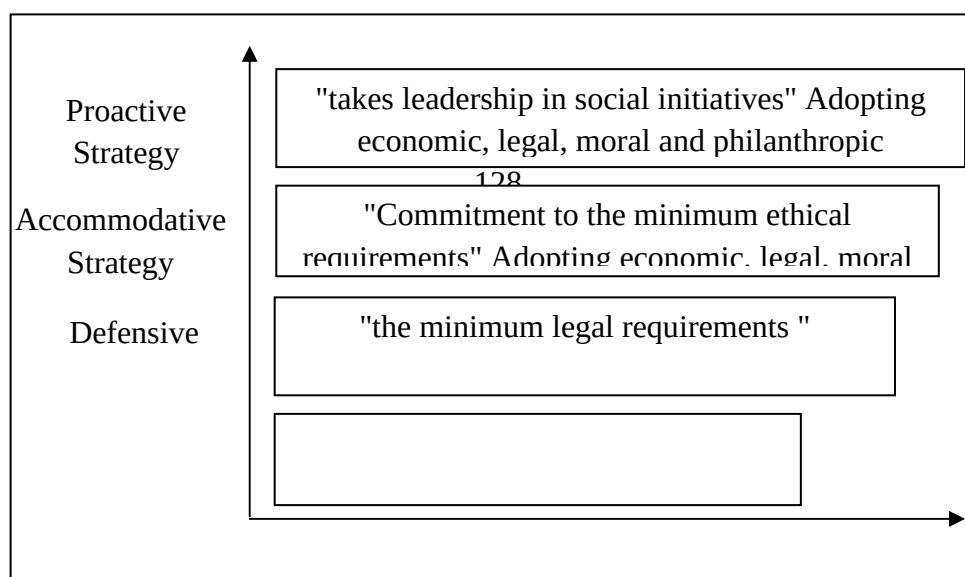
2.3.2. Defensive Strategy: By this strategy, the organization is concerned with doing what is legally required of it, i.e. the legal minimum imposed as a social role, with increased competitive and market pressures and more voices calling for consumer and environmental protection, the institution's management resort to legal maneuvers as a tactic to try to reducing or avoiding the obligations associated with the problems caused by the institution, and thus protecting it from falling into legal accountability.

2.3.3. Accommodative Strategy: In this strategy, the corporation takes an advanced step towards contributing to social activities by adopting spending in aspects related to ethical and legal requirements in addition to the economy, as it has a clear social role towards the expectations of society.

2.3.4. Proactive Strategy: The organization takes the lead in social activities by responding to many social requirements according to the estimates of managers in a way that suits the stakeholders; this strategy is characterized by the overall performance of the organization always taking into account that the decisions taken do not have an adverse effect for the aspirations and interests of society.

The previous strategies can be illustrated by the following figure:

Fig.1. Strategies for dealing with social responsibility



Source: (Berni بـرنـي, 2015, p. 115)

We point out here that the institution's approach to any of the previous strategies results from its conviction of the necessity of adopting or not adopting its responsibility towards society, as this reflects on all its activities and decisions and with a degree of integration between its strategy and the social responsibility strategy that it follows.

2.4. Trends of social responsibility: The practices of social responsibility applied by the institution towards the stakeholders, which means "all parties that exchange the relationship and interest with the institution from within and from outside" and this can be explained through the following: (Boudarja بودرجة, 2016, p. 186)

2.4.1. Social responsibility towards the local community: The community is considered an important segment for the institutions as it looks to embody the strength of relations with it and strengthen it, which requires them to double their activities towards it, by making more public welfare, which includes: contributing to supporting infrastructure, establishing bridges and gardens, contributing to reducing the problem of unemployment, supporting some sporting and recreational activities, respecting customs and traditions, supporting civil society institutions, providing assistance to people with special needs, continuous support to health and scientific centers, sponsoring charitable works ... etc.

2.4.2. Social responsibility towards consumers: it is represented in providing products at reasonable prices and quality, honest advertising, providing safe products, providing clear instructions about the product and its uses, the commitment of institutions to remedy the damage that occurs after the sale, a

commitment to the continuous development of products, and an obligation after violating the business rule such as monopoly ...etc.

١- **2.4.3.Social responsibility towards the environment:** protecting the environment from the damages resulting from the activity of the institution, contributing to environmental campaigns and preserving natural resources, adopting a rational environmental policy... etc. (Gachi قاشي & Boudarja بودرجة, 2018, p. 35)

2.4.4. Social responsibility towards shareholders: maximizing the value of the share and achieving the maximum possible profit, protecting the assets of the institution, the right to obtain sufficient information about the performance of the institution, fair dealing with shareholders without any discrimination, and involving shareholders in the important decisions of the institution.

2.4.5. Social responsibility towards employees: It includes respecting the labor laws, ensuring the worker's right to training and continuous training, his union rights, his involvement in decision-making, achieving job security and security from work accidents, issuing a code of professional conduct and ethics to control the behavior of workers, granting rewards and incentives for working individuals according to the principle of the competence and merit of workers, distributing a share to workers from annual profits. (Eishoush عيشوش & kazrabi كرازي, 2012, p. 10)

2.5. Principles of social responsibility: (Donna J. Wood) in his social performance model (Corporate Performance) notes that there are three main principles: (Donna J, 1991, p. 696)

2.5.1. Principle of Legitimacy: The Principle of Legitimacy, as it is the society that grants the legitimate institution and the ability to work, and the institution, in turn, must not violate the limits of the responsibility granted to it, because the community is able to impose types of penalties on the institution if its expectations are not met.

2.5.2. The Principle of Public Responsibility: This principle indicates that the institution is responsible for solving community problems, and the nature of the problems that the institution can solve varies with the nature of the institution.

2.5.3. The Principle of Managerial Discretion: Despite the freedom of the decision-makers to act in institutions, they are active players, and they must act by practicing these actions in an ethical manner according to the authority granted to them, in order to achieve socially responsible results.

Social responsibility also has other basic principles that can be summarized as follows: (Al-Hammouri الحموري, 2009, p. 03)

2.5.4. The principle of legal compliance: that the institution abides by all applicable local and international laws and regulations written, announced and implemented in accordance with established and specific procedures.

2.5.5. The principle of respect for international norms: That the institution respects international and governmental agreements, executive regulations, declarations, covenants, decisions, and guidelines when developing its policies and practices of social responsibility.

2.5.6. The principle of respect for the interests of the parties: the institution acknowledges and accepts that there is a diversity of interests for the parties concerned and diversity in the activities and products of the main and secondary institutions and other elements that may affect those parties concerned.

2.5.7. The principle of accountability: that the institution regularly discloses to the controlling authorities, legal authorities and the parties concerned in a clear, neutral and honest manner to the extent appropriate to the policies, decisions, and procedures that bear direct responsibility and also the expected effects of the above on the welfare of society and on sustainable development.

2.5.8. Principle of transparency: that the institution clearly, accurately and completely discloses its policy, decisions, and activities, including known and potential impacts on the environment and society, and that this information is available to people who are affected or potentially affected substantially by the institution.

2.5.9. The principle of respect for fundamental human rights: the institution implements policies and practices that respect the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

3.DANONE's social responsibility trends:

In the face of the many stakeholders in the institution, their diversity and the increase in their influence on them, it is imperative that they adhere to their social responsibility, as the institutions derive their legitimacy from the society in which they operate, especially if they operate in a sensitive field that enters them in a direct and long-term relationship with society, such as the food industries.

3.1. DANONE Group (French DANONE Groupe): is a French multinational company, which is considered one of the largest food industries companies in the world, its activity revolves around three business sectors: milk and its derivatives, biscuits, and mineral water, with a presence in 90 countries, it recently moved into the field of children's dairy as it bought both BABYLAC and MELOPA. (wikipedia, 2019)

3.2. The approach of social responsibility of DANONE: In 1972, social responsibility began as a philosophy and turned to a vision for DANONE, which appeared in the social responsibility activities of the company and the idea originally appeared during the era of the founder of the company "Antonio RIBOUD", while it turned into a message and had a strategy that defines implementation Actual realism in the era of his son, "Frank RIBOUD" in 2009, and the idea cemented this philosophy and strategy by establishing an institutional culture that takes into account economic and social considerations for doing business, achieving this balance in operations will ultimately lead to strengthening the social and economic aspect of DANONE as an institution by the parties and stakeholders on the other hand, and by ensuring sustainability. From this base, the environmental system fund was developed through a donation of 100 million Euros for the purpose of financing and supervising the implementation of double-goal activities, in parallel with this, DANONE's vision was modified to replace the pure business model with one that takes into account social and economic considerations and adopts the philosophy of "a stronger environmental system for a company more powerful". (Business organization منظمة العمل, 2015, p. 19)

3.3. DANONE's social responsibility to stakeholders:

3.3.1. DANONE's Social Responsibility to the Community: In 2007 DANONE, in partnership with DANONE & GRAMEENE, made yogurt from local cow's milk, extracts of fertilized dates with vitamins, marketed at a very low price of (0.06) Euro In order to meet the needs of a large number of consumers in poverty in Bangladesh, this product has achieved more than expected success, and the importance of this project lies in reconciling profitability on the one hand and social responsibility. (Saqr صقر, 2019, p. 158)

In 2009, the company established the environmental ecological system fund to support projects aimed at developing society in the world, in order to achieve purely social and humanitarian goals such as reducing malnutrition, reducing poverty, supporting societies ..., and in 2018 the fund established 45 projects in the countries of the world So that the company contributed 77 million Euros, and the employees of the company donated a day of work to support these social projects. (ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT, 2018, p. 167)

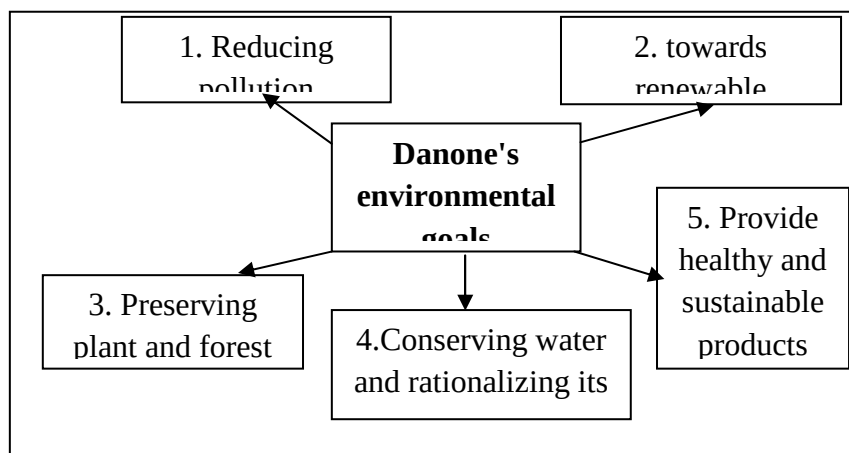
3.3.2. DANONE's social responsibility towards shareholders: Considering DANONE an economic company, its goal is to achieve profits, but in a manner that is appropriate for society's interests, in order to avoid social clashes and preserve the company's reputation, without giving priority to the economic interests of shareholders, when DANONE closes its factories in some European countries, it faces a crisis of social responsibility represented in its abandonment of its responsibility towards the workers, even with the settlement of the financial position of them after their demobilization

and obtaining all their dues, unemployment remains the problem that they will suffer from, this decision is considered legal, but it is inconsistent with the moral side humanitarian social responsibility, the company's decision to close its factories only serves shareholders and does not look at the interest of workers, which was not accepted by civil society, which demanded through consumer societies to boycott the company's products (lazhr لزهر, 2014, p. 102 ،103), hence DANONE went for a more committed approach to society in a way that preserves the interests of shareholders and society alike, recently, it bought "White Wave" as part of its expansion into the North American market to establish DANONE Wave, the newly-formed entity of "White Wave Foods" and "DANONE" dairy in the United States, which is the largest public utility company in the United States, and therefore is committed to balancing the financial interests of shareholders and the benefits to society. (CSR News, 2017)

3.3.3. Social responsibility of DANONE Direction of the environment:

DANONE seeks to be one of the largest green companies in the world, and this trend results from its conviction with great awareness to consumers in the era of globalization where it became the right of the consumer when buying a specific product to know its origin and its impact on the environment and based on this identified DANONE, within its 2015 environmental strategy, is determined to fight pollution and reduce global warming, and has drawn up a strategy for CO₂ emissions resulting from its business to be non-existent by the year 2050, this means that the company is responsible for its environmental impacts throughout the entire production cycle (Danone Website, 2016), as it has determined the company has in its environmental strategy five goals that we explain in the following figure:

Fig.2. Environmental targets from DANONE



Source: (Danone Website, 2016, p. 05)

The company's commitment to environmental preservation can also be illustrated by its waste recycling through the following table:

Table 1. Danone waste recycling

	2016	2017
The generated waste		
Total amount (thousands of tons)	290	260
Ratio of total amount of waste per ton (kg / ton)	38,0	36,2
Amount of recycled waste		

Total amount (thousands of tons)	242	217
Percentage of recovered waste (%)	83,4%	83,7 %

Source: (CHAUMARTIN & LAMBERT, 2018, p. 195)

From the above table, it is clear that the total amount of waste in 2017 decreased by 20 tons compared to 2016, and the rate of re-entry.

Recycling of waste increased by 0.3 in 2017 compared to the rate recorded in 2016. This indicates the company's environmental commitment and its endeavor to reduce the amount of waste to preserve the environment in which it operates.

3.3.4. DANONE's social responsibility towards employees: the company believes that its workers are part of its capital and pays great attention to them, as it operates under the slogan "one person, one vote, one participation" as an innovative model for managing employees, and the company seeks at the end of 2018 to involve all its 100,000 workers to know the challenges, opportunities, and objectives set by the company to achieve it by 2030 at the local and global levels, the company is also working in the next few years to establish a fund that allows workers to invest in the company's shares to enhance their loyalty and sense of ownership. (Danone Website, 2016)

The social responsibility of the company towards employees is reflected in the following:

- Work on the periodic training and training of employees, and their promotion;
- Establishing a specific body to coordinate safety, health and working conditions;
- Participation of workers in safety and health procedures at work;
- Striving to reduce and eliminate risks to the safety of workers;
- Continuous consultation with workers' representative bodies; (Danone stress)
- DANONE employees change their jobs every 3 years to encourage them to advance in their career path, whereby mobility is determined by

mutual agreement with the employee taking into account his aspirations in terms of career advancement and company needs;

- DANONE focuses on developing the talents of its workers locally and in a region where young talents were able to go to another country in their region for a mission from 3 to 6 months to develop their talents.

(Danone Website, 2016)

4. CONCLUSION:

Based on the foregoing, it can be said that social responsibility is a recent approach to most institutions today, as the strategies applied by institutions in dealing with social responsibility differ according to their conviction of the importance, in light of what we discussed in the study on DANONE's social responsibility practices, we reached the following results:

DANONE's awareness of the importance of social responsibility from the early years of its establishment and its conviction that it is a real investment and not just a cost;

- DANONE applies social responsibility practices to all stakeholders;
- DANONE seeks to achieve the development of local communities, and works to provide products of high quality and affordable prices;
- DANONE works to achieve a balance between the interest of shareholders and the interest of society.
- The company intends that the negative impact of CO₂ resulting from its operations will be zero by 2050;
- DANONE takes care of its workers by devoting the principle of equal opportunity between them without exception in terms of incentives, privileges, and training courses.

The study also provides a set of recommendations, as follows:

- The need for institutions to apply social responsibility programs towards society;
- Institutions define a clear vision and approach to the social role;
- Incorporating social responsibility policies and practices into the institution's strategy;
- The need to include social responsibility programs for all stakeholders, not just shareholders.

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