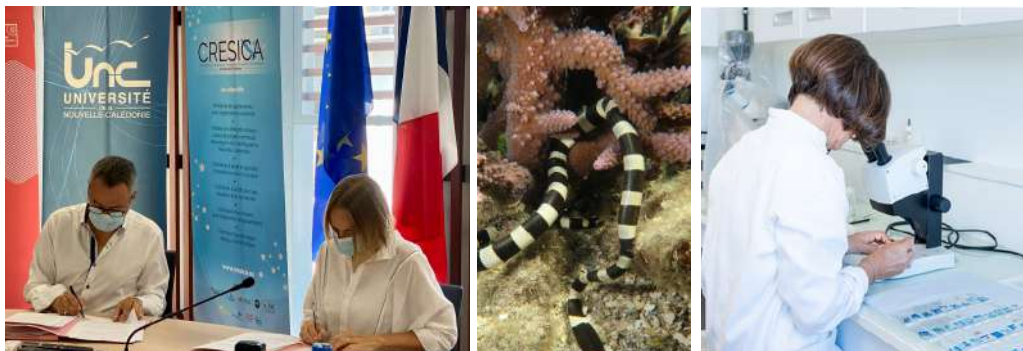


# Choose NC interviews Mr. Laurent l'Huillier, President of CRESICA

The Cooperation Consortium for Research, Higher Education and Innovation in New Caledonia was created in 2014 from the will of research organizations present in the territory and of the University of New Caledonia.



## What is the current situation of scientific research in New Caledonia, challenges and opportunities?

Scientific research in New Caledonia is materialized by the historical presence of several research establishments, each of which has their own research themes, making it possible to forge multiple collaborations. It is also part of an ecosystem that includes institutional players and many players from the socio-economic world, thus making it possible to optimize the transfer and promotion of scientific results. This ecosystem has been considerably structured in recent years, in order to better meet the expectations of society and better face many challenges. The challenges that concern New Caledonia, many of which are global and some more specific, can be summarized mainly around seven major issues: New Caledonian biodiversity, climate change, nickel, food autonomy, health, management of waste and the human and social issue.

— CRESICA was born in 2014 from the desire of research organizations present in the territory and of the University of New Caledonia to engage in a collective reflection intended to better coordinate their activities, what were the key stages of its development in New Caledonia -Caledonia?

It is above all a gradual evolution over several decades in the way research is done based on the need to ally

between researchers to solve complex problems, to respond better to calls for projects, to attract funding, or to ally with private partners to bring about innovations.

The main achievements since 2014 have been: the drafting of the shared project which makes it possible to identify scientific themes, better visibility and structuring of the research and innovation landscape, strengthening of dialogue between organizations and communities, place of a project management unit with dedicated staff, the acquisition of scientific equipment (more than 40 equipment acquired since 2011), the launch of a research program on the theme of water with 14 funded projects.

—CRESICA aims to pool large scientific investments, to bring stakeholders together and coordinate common research in support of public policies. What are your goals for the next 3 years?

In 2022, CRESICA will enter into a possible reorganization of the Consortium by 2023, particularly at the legal level. This will be an opportunity to give CRESICA more visibility in the long term, to better capture funding opportunities, develop more partnerships with private projects, and strengthen dialogue with communities.

—New Caledonia has an extremely rich marine and terrestrial biodiversity. What strategy does CRESICA propose to best preserve it?

The first condition for ensuring the preservation of biodiversity is to rely on robust knowledge established by science. CRESICA thus supports all the research carried out by local organizations, associated with other international organizations, to describe this biodiversity, understand how it works, its resilience in the face of change, and make recommendations. The issue of funding is obviously one of the keys to advancing this knowledge. Responses to calls for projects are one of the main sources of funding and CRESICA, through better consultation and collaboration between teams, can contribute to this.

Finally, it is imperative to raise awareness among the population, in particular on practices linked to fire, which constitutes one of the greatest threats to biodiversity.

—What research projects are you currently working on?

Two major projects currently occupy CRESICA: the "Au fil de l'eau" program and the TRIAD project.

Regarding the first, since 2017 the members of CRESICA have decided to focus their research work on integrated water management and its uses, involving communities and the business world.

This multi-year research program (2017 - 2022) gave rise to two calls for projects, thus making it possible, with the support of local authorities and the State, to finance 14 research projects, which address representations associated with water in customary lands, mangroves, through the antibiotic resistance of bacteria.

The TRIAD project (Research and innovation trajectory for a sustainable food system in New Caledonia), carries the ambition of an active transition towards a sustainable food system in New Caledonia, through a strong dynamic of economic innovation. and societal, based on renewed modes of interaction between players in the Caledonian innovation ecosystem, whether academic, economic or institutional.

If the final project is accepted, it should generate several million euros and will take place over three to five years.

—What is the link between CRESICA and the students, in terms of internships, presentation during study days or other programs?



The Master of Environmental Management at UNC has been supported for several years by CRESICA, financially, thanks to the State, the Government and the Provinces, and by the active participation of researchers from member organizations in the teaching. It is an exchange of good practices since very often these same students are then welcomed into internships with CRESICA members.

Today this Master is in full evolution. The University of New Caledonia (UNC), the University of French Polynesia (UPF) and the University of the South Pacific (USP), jointly carry out the project to create an innovative training and research network on sustainable development in the Pacific (ITN SUDPAC network). With training backed by research excellence, ITN-SUDPAC will help increase the attractiveness of French ESRI (Higher Education, Research and Innovation) in the Pacific, boost regional strategic cooperation in training and research, and stimulate exchanges of internationally renowned students and researchers in the area.

—Your final message for potential investors interested in research and innovation in New Caledonia? What do you think are the main assets of this region?

It is important to remember that significant progress has been made in the latter in terms of structuring and collaborations between the world of research, private actors and communities, and that the conditions are ripe for further progress.

There are many advantages for investors: economically, the territory has the 3rd largest GDP in the Pacific region, it presents a very dynamic entrepreneurship. In terms of science and innovation, research is carried out by competent organizations and teams, having developed a very large network of collaborations with private actors and institutions. In terms of natural resources, the great geological diversity of the territory results in abundant mineral resources, nickel, cobalt and potential rare earths such as scandium. Its exceptional biodiversity on a global scale is undoubtedly its major asset, in the short, medium and long term.

