



EDITOR'S PICKS 28 JUNE 2021

# Rooftop Farms /

Knorr

**FMCG brand transforms city rooftops into sustainable food farms to fight hunger poverty**

► <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dl7F10pnhLg>

In 2019, an economic crisis in Egypt resulted in a hunger emergency across the country, meaning people in cities were living in a constant state of food insecurity.

Ahead of Ramadan, in March 2020, FMCG brand **Knorr** built sustainable farms on city building rooftops where people could grow crops to eat and sell to fight hunger and improve people's livelihoods.



Working with agency **FP7 McCann** in Cairo and Egypt's largest NGO, Misr El Kheir, the brand identified cities that were especially poverty-stricken with unforgiving landscapes – dry, arid weather conditions and lack of space in cities makes it especially difficult for people to grow their own food.

Working with German engineers, Knorr created **Rooftop Farms**: fully sustainable gardens that were placed across buildings in Egypt where, using hydroponic technology, crops could grow despite the heat.



People living in food poverty were asked to care for and maintain these gardens. Knorr held lessons to teach people how to farm successfully and, as a result, the farmers could live off their own food. In addition, Knorr also bought crops from the gardens, which provided a new and reliable source of income.

To promote the initiative, Knorr painted murals on tall buildings on commuter routes showing families tending to the gardens. The brand also created films that showed what a self-sufficient life in a low-income urban district could look like and other social content.

Following its success, Misr El Kheir extended its support and resources to scale the idea to 100 more rooftops. The campaign is ongoing and, to date, Knorr has converted 198 rooftops.



**Results** / According to the agency, the campaign achieved **\$3.5m** in free earned media. Knorr also enjoyed a **19%** year-on-year sales volume increase, a **2.5%** bump in brand awareness and **33%** increase in brand relevance compared to the year before. Knorr in Egypt became the **fourth largest** food business for parent company Unilever in the world and it became the **number one** fastest growing food business in Unilever's portfolio.

**Update 08/09/21:** To find out more about the insight and strategy behind this campaign read our interview with Tahaab Rais, regional head of strategy at McCann Worldgroup for the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey, as well as Yasmin Shehab, digital account director at FP7 McCann, [here](#).

## Contagious Insight /

**Acts not ads** / It would have been an easier option for a company as huge as Unilever to simply donate a sum of money to hunger charities and benefit from the PR. Instead, Knorr went the extra mile and launched a campaign rooted in local insight. The brand took time to investigate why locals couldn't grow food in the city and provided innovation and infrastructure that has true longevity. As the agency explained to us, the under-privileged in Egypt are always at the mercy of when, and how much, people are willing to donate to charities. But, by providing a long-term solution, Rooftop Farms will create food and profit for residents so they don't have to live in a state of insecurity. It's refreshing to see a CSR initiative that combines great PR with a useful idea and is still relevant to the brand and product.

**Hello fresh** / This campaign links back to Knorr's core brand purpose: 'To reinvent food for humanity by being healthier for both people and the land.' In Egypt especially, Knorr has been trying to fight hunger through various donation programmes, yet nothing was having a significant effect. Aside from the value of the idea itself, this campaign makes more sense for the brand than a simple food donation. Enabling people to grow fresh food reinforces the link between Knorr and cooking fresh and also creates positive mental associations between nutrition and the brand. Ultimately, Knorr's main product – stock – makes up a small part of a healthy meal. The rest should be fresh ingredients, which Knorr has now empowered people in Egypt to grow for themselves.

**Generosity pays** / Knorr has benefited from this campaign from a business perspective as well. In addition to a nice 19% boost in year-on-year sales volume, brand relevance increased 33%. As described in *Contagious Commandments: Ten Steps to Brand Bravery* by Paul Kemp-Robertson and Chris Barth, it pays to be generous. 'It may come as a shock,' the book explains, 'but sometimes the best advertising isn't always advertising. Sometimes, the best and most enduring solutions come from being supremely consumer-centric, by seeking to solve the pain points in people's everyday lives.'

---

This article was downloaded from the Contagious intelligence platform. If you are not yet a member and would like access to 11,000+ campaigns, trends and interviews, email [sales@contagious.com](mailto:sales@contagious.com) or visit [contagious.com](https://contagious.com) to learn more.