

## **What farming models for European societies in the 21st century?**

Report on the seminar held on 28th November 2006

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## Foreword

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**O**ne might say without overstating the case, that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is woven into the European construction. Provided for in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, it was set up five years later and has ever since been at the core of EU life. Common policy (for many years the only one) managed by Brussels, it has weathered structural crises and moved with the times, ever remaining a major component of European life but – like Europe herself, grown from six to twenty-seven members – in constant mutation.

In the beginning, everything was clear and simple, at least with regards to its aims, which, in a nutshell, came to European food self-sufficiency, farmers' standard of living, and market stabilisation. But how Europe has changed since then! The return of prosperity; the repeated enlargements and adjustments of the Community; the merging of the two Europes, East and West, into one; globalisation... For the farming community – which, like no other has endlessly had to adjust –, the outlook is, yet again, blurred: the future CAP, post 2013, must be redefined as early as 2008. It is with this scheduled re-evaluation in mind that *Notre Europe* has come up with its CAP 2013 project.

The very hint of agricultural policy reform traditionally turns the Union into an ideological battlefield. Those who want to reduce its budget share – if at all possible drastically – fight it out with those for whom the defence of the CAP is synonymous with a constant budgetary effort. Other and manifold elements call for a reappraisal of the European agricultural policy, to wit: external constraints, that is to say the battle which pitches North against South in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) tough negotiations; the growing influence within the WTO of the emergent countries; the emergence, in rich countries at any rate, of fresh concerns for food safety, protection of the environment, the quest for sustainable development, animal welfare; the unrelenting worldwide trend towards urbanisation which alters consumption needs and patterns – agri-food business and mass distribution have now got the upper hand while the consumer has taken precedent over the producer...All these changes were raised and addressed during the seminar Nadège Chambon and Aziliz Gouez, research fellows at *Notre Europe* ran under the title “*What Farming Models for European Societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?*”

In a Europe whose farmers now represent but a minority of the working population, the way we conceive farming policies has to be altered in response. The turnaround is probably not complete. But there can be no doubt that it has considerable impact on people’s relationship to farming and to food. This new deal therefore calls for a reengineering of the CAP incorporating four major requirements: acknowledging the new world order (or disorder), addressing the changes in lifestyles of now broadly urbanised European societies, keeping alive a farming sector answerable to our environment, preserving the specificities and values of territories which are a component of peoples’ identities. Here, we cross paths with another focus of *Notre Europe* – European identity.

Alain Dauvergne, Adviser of *Notre Europe*

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## Thinking the future of farming in relation to the transformations of European identity

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### 1. Introduction

The term « agriculture » refers to all activities relating to the cultivation of land, and more generally to any transformation of the natural environment which enables the production of crops and animals useful to humans. This activity, necessary for the very survival of society, was a fundamental issue during the first few decades of the European project. It was during this period that the common agricultural policy (CAP) was put in place. The European institutions and the governments of the Member States are about to launch a new reform of the CAP. The negotiations will open in 2008, with a view to implementing a new generation of agricultural policies starting in 2013.

The approach of these negotiations, which promise to prove decisive for the future of European agriculture, spurred *Notre Europe* to organise a major colloquium in November 2006, entitled “*Finding a framework for*

*agricultural policies, tomorrow, in Europe and in developing countries*". As the first stage of a prospective exercise intended to supply ideas to the decision makers involved in these negotiations, its aim was to report progress on some of the factors liable to affect the future of European agriculture in the medium term. From the event a preliminary overview of the situation emerged, comprising many factors: an environmental diagnosis; an economic diagnosis (the development of world markets); a scientific and technical diagnosis (GMOs, biofuels); an analysis of legal and institutional developments (world trade negotiations); and a sociological analysis.

This last sociological angle was the specific focus of the seminar "What kind of agriculture for European societies in the 21st century?". In publishing an account of these discussions our aim is to provide an insight into the major transformations European societies have undergone and – consequently – into the new expectations citizens have regarding agriculture.

Our approach stems from a research programme undertaken by *Notre Europe* on **European identity**, which has aimed to further our understanding of how Europeans live and what values motivate them. For *Notre Europe*, one of the EU's most important challenges is to better take into account the aspirations of citizens. This exercise is not at all simple in today's affluent societies, where the need for subsistence has been replaced by complex and diverse political priorities. Yet, the same applies to the common agricultural policy as applies to all policies: it cannot be conceived in a democratic vacuum, where citizens' support for the decision makers' trade-offs does not matter. This is why it seemed to us indispensable that we complement studies by scientists and economists with more all-encompassing analyses of the developments in European lifestyles.

## 2. Theoretical background

The essential function of agriculture is to feed people, though its role in giving a human face to the land is also fundamentally important. Farmers transform untamed nature into zones hospitable to human beings. Starting with an analysis of lifestyles, one of the possible approaches to analysing the future of farming in Europe would thus consist of a study of the evolution of eating habits and of connections to the land – and, thereby (*mutatis mutandis*) of connections to the environment and to "natural heritage".

### 2.1 From rural to urban civilisation

The related questions of food supply and connection to the land cannot be addressed, in modern Europe, without looking closely at urbanisation. Begun in Europe centuries ago, the shift from essentially rural to broadly industrial and urbanised societies is today almost complete. What is now at stake in this shift to an urban way of life is a radical transformation in the relationship between city-dwellers and farmers – a transformation of the very structure of this relationship (mediation of exchanges and monetisation, distribution systems, etc.) but also of its quality (de-personalisation, rationalisation):

*"The metropolis has always been the seat of the money economy. Here the multiplicity and concentration of economic exchange gives an importance to the means of exchange, which the scantiness of rural commerce would not have allowed. Money economy and the dominance of the intellect are intrinsically connected. They share a **matter-of-fact attitude in dealing with men and with things**; and, in this attitude, a formal justice is often coupled with an inconsiderate hardness. (...) Money is concerned only with what is common to all: it asks for the exchange value, it reduces all quality and individuality to the question: How much? (...) In the sphere of the economic psycho-*

*logy of the small group it is of importance that under primitive conditions production serves the customer who orders the good, so that the producer and the consumer are acquainted. The modern metropolis, however, is supplied almost entirely by production for the market, that is, for entirely unknown purchasers who never personally enter the producer's actual field of vision. Through this anonymity the interests of each party acquire an unmerciful matter-of-factness; and the intellectually calculating economic egoisms of both parties need not fear any deflection because of the imponderables of personal relationships. The metropolitan way of life is certainly the most fertile soil for this reciprocity [between monetary economy and rational objectivity], (...) Throughout the whole course of English history, London has never acted as England's heart but often as England's intellect and always as her moneybag!"<sup>1</sup>*

Taking this phenomenon into account is crucial if we are to understand the relationship Europeans have with farming. When, for the vast majority of consumers, the producer is invisible and the relationship boils down to the simple matter of hard cash, it is hard to see why a consumer would care to choose goods from Europe rather than those produced less expensively in other parts of the world.

1 Georg Simmel, « Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben », Jahrbuch der Gehestiftung, IX, 1903 ; Edition française de référence : « Les grandes villes et la vie de l'esprit », Philosophie de la modernité, Editions Payot, 2004.

Translation: adapted by D. Weinstein from Kurt Wolff (Trans.) The Sociology of Georg Simmel. New York: Free Press, 1950, pp.409-424. [http://condor.depaul.edu/~dweinste/intro/simmel\\_M&ML.htm](http://condor.depaul.edu/~dweinste/intro/simmel_M&ML.htm).

It is worth noting that where the English language refers to 'matter-of-factness', the French language speaks of 'pure objectivity', implying neutrality/detachment; and that what is 'inconsiderate hardness' in English, in French is called 'harsh ruthlessness' ('dureté impitoyable') (TR)

## 2.2 New determinants of the relationship to farming

The Simmel quote above is dated 1903. European societies have evolved greatly over the subsequent century. The rise in living standards, advances in transport and science, the mixing of populations resulting from increased migrations: these developments affect consumers' choices and, more generally, Europeans' expectations of agriculture. They have further intensified several trends already in progress with the transition to urban market economies - such as the **diversification of food supply**, the erosion of climatic constraints or the reduced importance of seasonal variations. In addition, the effects of increased prosperity have been compounded by the transition to the service economy – where the value of goods depends increasingly on their immaterial qualities.

In 2004 the FAO published a report on factors affecting attitudes towards agriculture. More precisely, it focuses on the role of agriculture in the shaping of national identity and on the impact a country's level of development has on the way farming is treated. On the strength of a comparative analysis of the situation in several countries (Mali, Ghana, China, India, Morocco, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, South Africa, Western Europe), the conclusions of this report show that **the more affluent a society is, the greater the value it confers on the cultural specificity of its farming**, the more inclined it is to protect what has become rural heritage, and the more its market includes culturally-branded (marketed) farm produce. All these factors need be taken into account within the framework of our research on the future of European farming:

*“In transitional countries, such as China and India (where agriculture no longer accounts for a major share of the GNP, but more than half of the population is still settled in rural areas), rural cultural capital tends to be looked upon as a legacy of the past that impedes progress*

*(...) In neo-industrial societies (South Africa and Mexico), a variety of rural cultural capital based goods are internalized in market segments. Affluent urban populations consider it worthwhile to pay more for typical, authentic, ethnic commodities and food than for their industrial equivalents. This trend blossoms in industrial societies (Western Europe), where access to and exploitation of the cultural and natural assets needed for the production of these commodities are regulated. In these instances, landscape management, quality certification, and geographic indication policies are promoted by governments to protect these assets from misuse or abuse.”<sup>2</sup>*

In addition, one effect of European urbanisation is **the individualisation of ways of life** (or indeed *lifestyle* – for such is the impulse of people with cash to aestheticize their everyday life). Influenced by increasingly varied social processes, the modern city-dweller makes greatly diversified choices, weighs up and decides, according to circumstances, between a range of rationalities, finalities, value and reference systems: taste, quality, health, cost, ethics (fair trade), nutrition, etc. These considerations will no doubt divert, possibly “validate” (nay “soften” - always an easier thing to do with a full belly...) the attitudes of rich consumers towards greater concern for producers. The impersonal, matter-of-fact nature of exchanges as described by Simmel must therefore be considered in the light of European nutritional practices as they stand today. It is particularly striking to observe the extent to which subjective elements (factual or symbolic) are being reintroduced in exchanges: British marketing today has its products speaking in the first person ; an increasing quantity of foodstuffs – up to and including those sold in hypermarkets – give a full account of their identity (where

<sup>2</sup> Extrait du rapport de synthèse 2004 du programme de recherche RoA (*Roles of Agriculture*) intitulé «Analyse socioéconomique des rôles de l’agriculture et de leurs conséquences pour la définition de politiques dans les pays en développement » : <http://ftp.fao.org/es/esa/roa/pdf/summary.pdf>  
Ce programme de recherche est mené par la Division de l’Economie du Développement Agricole (ESA) de l’Organisation des Nations Unies pour l’Alimentation et l’Agriculture (FAO) : [http://www.fao.org/es/esa/roa/index\\_fr.asp](http://www.fao.org/es/esa/roa/index_fr.asp)

they come from, who produced them); the proliferation of small-scale distribution networks, indeed of direct-sale setups, has revived the possibility of direct contact between producer and consumer.

However, these exceptions to what Simmel calls the “inconsiderate hardness” of the consumer’s logic do not imply the end of such a logic. This observation is even more valid for the urban dwellers of central and Eastern Europe, who are avid consumers of standardised agro-industrial products, and for whom price remains an essential factor. In these countries only a prosperous minority displays concerns similar to those which now preoccupy wide segments of western European society. It remains to be seen whether the attitudes of these richer consumers indicates a more general trend in European food supply.

### 3. Clarifications on the speaker's presentation

*“(The) peasant of the past, died ‘old and satiated with life’ because he stood in the organic cycle of life (...) Whereas civilized man, placed in the midst of the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, may become ‘tired of life’ but not ‘satiated with life.’ He catches only the most minute part of what the life of the spirit brings forth ever anew, and what he seizes is always something provisional and not definitive.”<sup>3</sup>*

#### 3.1 Main aims

The changes happening in all these areas of human activity – agriculture, science, industry, trade, transport, recreation and others – are so complex that it is difficult to build a theoretical model which can hold together all the pieces of the puzzle. This dilemma of the researcher echoes a more widely held concern: that it is no longer easy to pinpoint the role of agriculture in society. It is clear that the contributions made in the course of this seminar will not exhaust the richness of the subject: we do not expect all-encompassing theses from the participants. We ask them rather to assemble their contributions with the following considerations in mind:

**3.1.1.** The objective of the seminar is to present a **current reading** of the developments in European lifestyles and the expectations of Europeans vis-à-vis agriculture. The CAP was conceived at the end of the 1950s in specific circumstances: those of post-war reconstruction and the search for self-sufficiency in food provision. Reforms since then, including the transition – in several stages – from price support to aid decoupled from production, have been genuinely revolutionary. It is today in-

<sup>3</sup> Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, 1919. English translation: [http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/lecture/science\\_frame.html](http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/lecture/science_frame.html) (translation not attributed)

dispensable to re-examine the wider context of European agriculture. This seminar will therefore try to **highlight the new determining factors in the choices made by European citizens** (the importance of environmental considerations, people's willingness to pay for an agriculture which respects the countryside, etc.). In doing this, we would like to put into perspective the CAP's original aims and its new challenges, and therefore to help decision-makers **assess the current relevance of considerations dating from the policy's creation** (security of food supply, market stabilisation, agricultural modernisation, a fair living standard for farmers, reasonable prices for consumers).

**3.1.2.** There are numerous aspects of life in European societies which can be observed through the prism of eating habits and connections to the land: developments in family life, changes in the relation to one's body, evolution of work practices, etc. We look to the panel contributors to use the results of their research to **identify among these numerous aspects those which they think are likely to structure the expectations of Europeans** with regards to farming.

**3.1.3.** *Notre Europe* sets much store by the **exploratory dimension** of the analyses the speakers will share. Designed as a prospective exercise, our seminar would miss its target if we were content with stating the obvious. We hope the speakers, while not bypassing information indispensable for a sound grasp of the subject, will bring their attention to bear on **issues which are not yet clearly identified or taken on board** in the current raft of agricultural and rural development policies. We also suggest they concentrate on those of the changes they have observed which they expect to develop significant ramifications in the mid-term.

**3.1.4.** It is important that the phenomena to be analysed have a **European dimension**. We would ask the speakers to illustrate their addresses with examples drawn from their particular field (necessarily specific, with



Europe so defined by the diversity of its ways of life, nutritional habits, or rural histories) whilst **making sure they establish a link with similar phenomena** observable in neighbouring countries. We aim to single out some common trends without masking in the analytical process any element peculiar to the context studied by each contributor.

N.B.: it goes without saying that in the case of the second panel, centred on Eastern and Central-European societies, the expected spectrum of the comparison is slightly different.

**3.1.5.** The symposium in which this seminar is set is the **first stage** of a prospective exercise to be pursued in 2007 with the formulation of proposals intended for the European institutions and Member State governments. The aim of this first phase is to arrive at as accurate a **diagnosis** as possible of the major sociological trends liable to influence the future of European farming. Accordingly we ask speakers to **eschew an over-prescriptive approach in their analyses**.

## **3.2 Specific aims of each panel**

The explanations above apply to the three seminar panels. With these general aims clearly stated, let us now briefly recap the specific object of each:

### **Panel 1 – City-dwelling and changes in the relation to food and the environment**

The object of this panel is to give an update on lifestyles in Europe, to elucidate the major evolutions to be taken into account, to identify those aspects of behaviour, novel today, which could prefigure the shape of things to come, and to help detail and qualify the new-found attachment of Europeans to farming, to culinary heritage, to the rural landscape and – more broadly – to the environment.

### **Panel 2 - Mutations in Central and Eastern European societies**

We thought it crucial to dedicate a panel to the specific shifts observed in the new Member States of the EU. The object will be to gauge the distinctive features that typify the rural histories and consumer practices in these post-communist countries: is an “alignment” on the trends observed in the West at work here, with “catching up” a mere question of time? Or will these specificities lead to the development of original models?

### **Panel 3 – What will be the indigenous and cultural drivers of European agriculture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

This panel is probably the most open to prescriptive thinking. Its object is to evaluate the extent to which proximity effects and the recognition of cultural and territorial diversities are relevant to thinking on the future of farming in Europe: is it conceivable that a different management of the next generation of agricultural policies could take on board the specificity of nutritional habits and production systems peculiar to different European regions (Mediterranean Europe, Northern Europe etc.)? What will be the role of local authorities and local actors in the conception and implementation of the future CAP?

## Digest of the contributions

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**Henri Nallet** former minister for agriculture opened the debate reminding the audience of the original aims of the CAP as stated in the Treaty of Rome. This historic survey over, he could set in context the current situation weighed down as it is by uncertainties and by internal and external constraints. In particular he makes the link between the identity crisis the Union is currently experiencing and European failure in reclaiming the significance, the coherence of their only truly integrated policy. Convinced that it is urgent to conduct a critical analysis of the CAP's results, and of what the citizens expect from farming, he entreats European leaders to reconsider the overall objectives of the CAP before getting bogged down in the practical means to that end.

**Clemens Discherl** considered the new drivers in the relationship between city dwellers and farming. He shows how since the advent of the new environmentalists in the eighties, farming has been at the centre of a lively public debate in Germany. In particular, expectations from farming can be

understood as an expression of the individualisation process characteristic of urban societies: a growing interest in the “local”, the “specific”, the “familiar” in reaction to globalisation; a tendency to idealise the past in the hope of conquering the feeling of insecurity which is part and parcel of modernity; overemphasis on issues of health and demands concerning traceability and quality; concerns for animal welfare, etc... Going beyond economic considerations, he stresses the ethical, socio-cultural dimensions implied in the “farming question” as set today in Germany.

**Jean-Louis Rastoin** questioned the feasibility of an alternative food pattern in a global context of rampant urbanisation and convergence towards an agro-tertiary set-up. According to him, the intensive agro-business model, specialised, concentrated, financialised and globalised has brought about outstanding achievements in the field of price reduction and product safety. But it also creates negative externalities, which in the long term threaten peoples’ nutritional balance and the planet’s environmental stability. So he calls on researchers to pursue a few lines of thought drawn from the concept of sustainable development through the setting up of shorter and more diversified production and distribution systems, the discussion of governance models on a regional, national and international scale, the reconfiguration of territories – all prospects that rely on the devising of proactive public policies

**Zoltan Lakner** analysed the specificities of consumption behaviours and food chains in former communist countries. The shift to a market economy has displaced the market structures but also the consumption patterns. Private middlemen have appeared between consumers and producers such as superstores importing foodstuffs. The demise of shortage economy has opened the way to consumption societies typified by diversified choice opportunities. With the proviso that models have but an explanatory value – “*the consumer*” does not exist – Zoltan Lakner puts forward a typology of Hungarian consumers. Closely linked to a person’s socio-economic

status, the explosion of consumer choice testifies to the main evolution of changing economies: the advent of social inequalities. The young Hungarian market economy evinces today trends relatively similar to the characteristics found in West-European societies – notably when it comes to food safety and certifications of regional origin.

**Maria Halamska** focussed on the role of the CAP in the transformations taking place in the Polish countryside. She examines the specific features of the Polish transition that lead to an “end of the peasant farmer” which was not followed by the rural migration process through which the working population can be redistributed into other economic sectors. As a result, the countryside has retained a significant population of “quasi-peasants” with political leanings towards the agrarian-populist, Euro-sceptic, anti-liberal parties that in turn affect the whole country’s development. Maria Halamska goes on to analyse how the CAP is perceived and more specifically how Polish farmers, on the whole very favourable to direct subsidies are conversely rather wary of the CAP’s new strategic objectives (rural development, environmental measures).

**Jean-Pierre Vercruysse** approached the question of the future of the European countryside in the light of an original citizens consultation experiment. The project in question, named “European citizens’ panel on the future of farming<sup>4</sup>” opens up interesting avenues towards reforms in the governance of the European farming policy. The debates, conducted within panels set up in ten different European regions, highlight the significant contribution local authorities can make when more closely involved in the implementations of this policy. As a result, Jean-Pierre Vercruysse advocates a more systematically “bottom-up” approach to the drafting and implementing of the next generation of European policies.

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4 Role of rural areas in tomorrow’s Europe

**Bertrand Hervieu** offered three observations liable to inform CAP prospective thinking. The first deals with European farming's polarisation: how can small and medium farmers' aspiration and business farmers (agro business)s' ambitions wholly bereft of the concept of "peasantry", be reconciled within a common theoretical framework? The second addresses issues of mobility and the concentration drive typical of contemporary European production: have we got in place public policies with adequate leverage to manage the problems (environment, transport infrastructure) arising from the uneven distribution of production across the European territory? The third concerns the EU's relation with the countries south of the Mediterranean in the domains of farming and food production and their social implications.

As a conclusion, former Agriculture and Rural Development Commissioner **Franz Fischler** sketches some of the most important new features of European farming. In a context of demand-driven markets and in societies where farmers are but a minority, he stresses in particular the need to take into account food chains in their entirety – from "table to stable". European farming must, in his view, be able to meet the diverse demands of differing types of consumers. Policies must accordingly be devised which allow for differentiation, enabling farmers and agro-businesses to supply the market segment, or niche, which they are best positioned to satisfy. Finally he calls for the continuation of multilateral negotiations in the framework of the WTO, and for a reinforcement of the cooperation with the countries south of the Mediterranean but also with those on Europe's eastern most boundaries.





















## Programme

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**Moderator:** Pierre Lepetit, Vice-president, Notre Europe

**Introduction:** Henri Nallet, Former French Minister of Agriculture

### **1st Panel - Urbanity and evolution in relation to food, territory and the environment**

**New determinants in the relation between urbans and agriculture: Case-study on contemporary Germany**

Clemens Discherl, Sociologist, University of Nürtingen

**Agriculture and agro-food system in a urbanization / tertiarization model**

Jean Louis Rastoin, Professor, Economist and agronomist, Agro. Montpellier, Director UMR Moisa, France

Floor discussion

### **2nd Panel - Changes in Central and Eastern European societies**

**Consumer behaviour in Central and Eastern Europe**

Zoltan Lakner, Department of Agricultural Economics and Food, University of Corvinus, Budapest

**The role of peasants in contemporary Polish society**

Maria Halamska, Sociologist, University of Warsaw, Polish Academy of Sciences

Floor discussion

### **3rd Panel - Which territorial and cultural dynamics for European agriculture in the 21st century?**

Contribution of Bertrand Hervieu, Secretary General, ICAMAS (International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies), France

Contribution of Jean Pierre Vercruysse, European Association for Information on Local Development, Coordinator « European Citizens panels, Belgium

Floor discussion

### **Conclusion**

Franz Fischler, President Forum Eco-social Europe, Former European Commissioner for agriculture and rural development, Austria

David Baldock, Director, Institute for European Environmental Policy, UK

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