



Outlines of a strategic work programme 2014-2020

1. The Common Agricultural Policy

a. The reformed CAP 2014-2020: implementation, monitoring and evaluation

After a long and hard fought negotiation and decision making process between Commission, European Parliament and Council the Regulations for the CAP 2014-2020 are expected to be published at the end of 2013. The new CAP will include a number of new elements, both in the First Pillar (notably greening) and Second Pillar (focus on cooperation and innovation). One outcome of the negotiation process is that a large number of details concerning the First Pillar have been left to the MS. They have to inform the Commission about their decisions concerning these points before August 1 2014. By that time also most of the new Rural Development Programmes will have been approved by the Commission.

The Groupe de Bruges wants, in collaboration with partner organisations, to closely follow, research and discuss the following matters:

- The implementation of the First Pillar in the MS (national and if applicable at regional level) concerning items that have been left to the discretion of the MS
- The effects of the redistributive measures (capping, convergence, top ups for young farmers, small farms, etc.) on the farming sector
- The implementation of the greening measures and their effects on agricultural productivity and ecological benefits
- The implementation of the Rural Development Programmes, especially concerning the cooperation measures (see also point 2), sustainability measures, support for young farmers and small farmers and innovation. Concerning the last point, the Groupe de Bruges has already formed a working group on the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (see annex 1)

Although a mid-term review was not part of the outcome of the negotiations, it is generally expected that in the context of the mid-term review of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (2017), also the CAP will be evaluated. The Groupe de Bruges wants to use the outcome of its activities to formulate and advocate a series of recommendations for policy and decision makers at both national and European level in the framework of this midterm review.

b. Which policy for agriculture, food and rural areas beyond 2020?

Although the Groupe de Bruges considers the CAP 2014-2020 as a step in the right direction, it cannot be considered the 'final CAP'. On a positive note we can conclude that the whole process to come to a new policy has become more transparent and more democratic (role of EP) with a larger involvement of civic society. The downside is that in the EU-28 the decision making process has become so complex that there is always an imminent risk of bloodless compromises.

The Groupe de Bruges wants to come away from this muddle to be able to reflect independently on what future policies Europe needs for agriculture, food and rural areas from a long term perspective. In our 2008 book “The dilemmas of globalisation” we have identified a number of issues that are still relevant for this debate.

In this context a number of overarching and interrelated issues can be identified:

- The concept of private versus public governance concerning food supply chains, management of public goods and the development and dissemination of knowledge and innovation as well as the relationship between the public and private domain, between state and market, in which also the notion of the commons could be reintroduced
- the existing cultural, geographical and economic diversity across Europe
- the international political and economic context and the effects (positive and negative) of the ongoing process of globalisation and global demographic trends, which are to a large extent lacking in the current debate
- the necessary integration of different policy domains to come to an holistic approach towards a social, ecological and economical sustainable agriculture and food system. Integration between different policy issues and objectives and between different levels of government (from local to global)
- the transition of the Common Agricultural Policy as a cornerstone of European Policy and indeed the European project towards an integrated policy on sustainable production and consumption
- the different models for the development of European agriculture (industrial/technological model versus artisanal/localised model) and their effects on the environment (soils, water, climate change, bio diversity, landscapes), on the vitality of rural areas, on employment and on public health (ref. IAASTD report and recent development of the notion of agro-ecology as proposed by Oliver de Schutter)
- the role of citizens in the transition of policy and food production and consumption and their commitment towards taking co-responsibility in private governance models.

Based on these issues the Groupe de Bruges wants to:

- write a book on the past and the future of the CAP in the framework of its 20th anniversary next year
- annually organise multi stakeholder summer camps to discuss the future of European food production and consumption, agriculture, resource management and the vitality of rural areas in relation to CAP and other relevant European policies
- come up with a new vision and strategy on the future of agriculture, food and rural areas based on the notion of ‘ecological modernisation’. In this vision the outcomes of the current reform (point a.) will be confronted with the desired outcomes for the future. Subsequently a series of policy recommendations will be developed for the CAP post 2020.

2. Collective approaches as a new form of (self) governance of supply chains, public goods, territorial development, knowledge and innovation

In its Prague 2012 meeting the GdB has stated that new collective approaches should form the backbone of the new CAP. They offer a new, and potentially effective way to achieve the common goals of the reformed CAP. These new collective approaches not only refer to the collective management of public goods, but also address the way sustainable food supply chains could be formed and managed and rural development be organised (the latter through the concept of Community Led Local Development, a multistakeholder public-private partnership)

Furthermore, the operational groups of scientists, researchers and practitioners that will be formed in the framework of the European Innovation Partnership could be considered to be also a form of new collective approaches to bridge the gap between science and practice through which the development and dissemination of innovation could be fostered.

A first quick scan has revealed a multitude of local collectives already active in various countries of Europe. The Groupe de Bruges would like to promote the formation of one or more networks of these collectives on a European level to facilitate exchange of information, of best and bad practices and to foster a necessary increase in the level of professionalism among these collectives. A secondary objective could be to organise a continuous flow of exchange visits that could also help to overcome the negative attitude that still exists in the former communist member states and candidate member states towards collective approaches.

Based on this the GdB has taken the initiative to organise a first series of two meetings in collaboration with the French Ministry of Agriculture and the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs focussed at territorial cooperation for the provision of public goods in the context of the new CAP. The first meeting, a European conference, has already been scheduled to take place on December 20 and 21 in France. The second will take place in the Spring of 2014 in The Netherlands. The aim is to use these two meetings as a starting point to come to a European network of collectives and other stakeholders.

3. The future of family farming

Following the Year of the Cooperative (2013), the UN/FAO has declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming (<http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en>.) Family farming includes all family-based agricultural activities, and it is linked to several areas of rural development.

Family farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's.

Both in developing and developed countries, family farming is the predominant form of agriculture in the food production sector. Worldwide there are over 500 million family farms, making up over 98% of farming holdings. The majority of the EU's 12 million farms are family farms, passed down from one generation to another, and contribute to the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of rural areas.

They are responsible for at least 56% of agricultural production. Family farmers also work on a significant portion of the world's farming land. Even in Europe this is the dominant model of agricultural production accounting for 68% of agricultural land use.

There is a high diversity of family farms in the EU, in terms of their size, activities they engage in, availability of resources, degree of market integration, competitiveness, etc. They operate in different economic, agro-ecological and social contexts.

Family farms contribute substantially to employment opportunities in rural areas, more so than non-family farms. It is also assumed that family farms contribute more to the provision and management of public goods and agro-ecological services as well as other on farm non-agricultural activities such as agro-tourism, health care and education.

Nonetheless, family farming is under threat. Because of low income, long working hours, long term insecurity and low social status very few young people are willing to take over the family farm. On the other hand, young people from outside agriculture find it virtually impossible to start a farm because of difficult access to affordable land and credit facilities. Family farms also face other obstacles, such as poor access to profitable markets, economies of scale disadvantages and appropriate support services and policy.

What is exactly the added value of family farming vis à vis non-family farms in terms of employment, local quality products, environmental and other benefits? What are exactly the problems for family farms across Europe? What good examples are there from practice of new approaches and models to take over or start a family farm (e.g. Terre de Liens)? In what way are European policies, notably the CAP, helping or hindering family farms?

4. Sustainability: vision, indicators and real cost accounting

It is generally agreed among all stakeholders concerned that agricultural production should become more sustainable. Exactly what sustainability means, how it should be achieved, measured and incentivised by policy (taxes, subsidies, laws) or market demand is an altogether other matter. Behind different notions of sustainability are often deeply differentiating ideological and political visions. Furthermore, much policy and also certification system seem to be more based on assumptions on alleged sustainability than on cold, hard facts.

In the 1987 Brundlandt report, 'Our common future', sustainable development is defined as "a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This makes it extremely hard, if not impossible to translate sustainability into concrete indicators and action as we cannot know nor the abilities (i.e. skills, knowledge, technologies) nor the needs of future generations. Another approach towards sustainability is the 3P notion: People, Planet, Profit in which sustainability not only refers to the earth's capacity to fulfil our present and future needs, but also takes social (people, values, culture) and economic (profit, income, employment) sustainability into account. This means that our efforts to improve environmental performance should not go at the expense of the social and economic dimension and vice versa. In other words: a balanced, integrated approach is necessary; an approach in which all environmental, social and economic 'costs' and 'benefits', both current and future, of the whole life cycle of production and consumption, should be included. Such an 'holistic' approach, tentative and debatable as it may be, will at least have as advantage that externalisation effects (either from one private stakeholder to another private stakeholder or from the private domain to the public domain) will become more visible.

Despite a meanwhile long debate within and among the agricultural, food and research communities about sustainability and how to achieve it, the discussion remains to a large extent at the ideological and political level.

Research in the last years moved towards a recognised definition of a new paradigm of discipline, the science of sustainability, and its field of research.

Also the research on environmental impact analysis and sustainability indicators moved forward with the LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) methodology, that is generally recognised like the more effective way to analyse environmental impacts, and all the instruments concerning environmental and social accountability.

The attention is put on the analysis of sustainability in the whole food chain and on the sustainable food consumption.

Many topics are anyway on the table, for example:

- A clear communication to consumers of results of LCA analysis, able to make consumers more conscious and orient the consumer choices

- The analysis of the impact of actual and future consumption patterns and the definition of sustainable food consumption
- The food waste in the production and consumption
- The relations among the chain actors and the sustainable value chain analysis

A part from technical indicators, there are to date no good economic indicators for sustainability. Other economic sectors seem to advance more in this respect. The PUMA company for example started publishing its first environmental profit and loss account two years ago. A serious attempt to quantify the company's environmental externalities in monetary terms. Can this approach be made accessible and applicable for stakeholders in the food supply chains? Can this approach be used to discuss the functioning of markets and to redefine the notion of value added both on a micro and macro level? What policy implications could such an approach have?

5. The e-academy for policies on food, environment, agriculture and rural development

Based on the successful experience of the e-learning course on the CAP (EL-CAP) the Groupe de Bruges has the ambition to enlarge the spectrum of e-courses on European and non-European policies that deal with matters of food, agriculture, environment and rural areas. Preliminary talks with the US Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, but also the experience with the China Europa Forum have encouraged the idea that the development of similar courses on these policies that operate in other parts of the world (U.S., China, Brazil, etc.) could have an added value for a better mutual understanding towards the position of countries and regions. This virtual academy for policies on food, environment, agriculture and rural development would of course also contain one or more courses on international trade policies, WTO and RTA's. Preliminary talks with a potential founder have led to the conclusion that as a first step a feasibility study has to be carried out to further assess the potential of such an e-academy.

Recently the European Commission has approved an application by the Groupe de Bruges in the framework of the budget for information measures relating to the CAP. Between May 2014 and April 2015 a follow up of the existing e-learning course (EL-CAP) will be developed in conjunction with four events in four major European cities. This project will act as an important stepping stone for the e-learning policy academy.