



Strategic outlook

2014-2020

Introduction

In its almost 20 years of existence the Groupe de Bruges has been actively engaged in the debate on the future of (European) agriculture and rural areas and has discussed and proposed appropriate (European) policy measures.

Initially the debate was centered around two notions:

1. the inherent multifunctional nature of agricultural production and of rural areas;
2. the need for a multi polar world to come to a more balanced global socio-economic development of agricultural production and of rural areas.

As the notion of multifunctionality has now become an integral part not only for large parts of farming and rural areas across Europe, but also of European and national policies, the Groupe de Bruges has in addition been focusing more on the need to increase the sustainability (ecological, economic and social) of agricultural production, to improve the management of natural resources and to support the vitality of rural areas as well as to open the debate for an increasing number of actors and stakeholders. This we have framed the ecological modernisation process.

Concerning the second point, the world has witnessed the emerging of a number of new power blocks, not only China, India and Brazil, but to a lesser extent also a number of other countries in former developing countries. These countries, either as exporter or importer of agricultural commodities, play an increasing role in the global negotiations arena's, such as the UN and the WTO. Simultaneously also the European Union has witnessed a rapid expansion from 15 members to currently 28, representing over 500m people, the largest economy in the world and also the largest exporter and importer of agricultural commodities.

However, concerning agricultural production, the most important developments have been part of the overall globalization process. Over the last two decades we have witnessed a double and simultaneous process of a rapid expansion and concentration in the global agri-business industries. The already present concentration in trade and processing has been accompanied by a similar process in upstream industries (in particular seeds) and in retail. This ongoing process is compromising the position of both producers and consumers worldwide, while at the same time public governance seems to be waning to be able to control these developments.

The Groupe de Bruges has tried to keep up with these developments, by adapting its agenda and programme and by actively engaging new members that represent new stakeholders and/or new expertise.

Three main feats from recent years, that reflect this:

- the publication of our book 'The dilemmas of globalization. Towards a re-valuation of agriculture in 2008;
- the creation of ARC2020, of which the Groupe de Bruges was one of the founding organisations in 2010;
- the development of an e-learning course on the CAP in 2011.

Self-evaluation

Part of the Groupe de Bruges tradition is to organise from time to time a self-evaluation process: are we doing the right things in the right way? Do we still have added value? What is this added value and for whom?

Last year, as the contours of the CAP 2014-2020 became visible, we embarked in a new evaluation process. This process must lead to a renewed élan, ambition, strategy and programme for the coming years.

For this we organised a series a activities, starting in the Spring of 2013 with a meeting of the Board with staff of the FPH - which has supported the Groupe de Bruges from the start - followed by a Board meeting, a survey among the members and an internal members meeting in December. The process will be finalized at the next members meeting in April 2014.

A SWOT analysis was held to establish the Strong and Weak points as well as to assess the Opportunities and Threats (see Annex 1).

In summary three main points can be taken from this analysis:

- the need for a new long term vision
- the opportunity to use more the 'internal' capital among the Groupe de Bruges members
- the need to increase visibility.

Outlines for a new strategy

Our mission

To be (to remain) an independent network with a critical but in the end positive outlook on Europe, through which we feed the debate and develop solutions to come to more effective and integrated European policies, aimed at achieving sustainable agriculture, food production and consumption; sustainable management of natural resources and durable vitality of rural areas and communities in conjunction with urban development and communities, based on a global, long term vision and a multi-actor, multi-stakeholder involvement, as a way to contribute to the construction of the European project at large.

We regard food, environment and rural areas from a holistic, integrated, systems approach, involving the different levels (local to global) of governance (public and private) to achieve the ecological modernisation of agriculture.

Our functions

To achieve this mission the Groupe de Bruges aims to:

- ✓ contribute to better European policies on agriculture, food systems, rural development and environment in an independent way, not connected to specific sectorial, territorial or political interests. This will remain the core-business of the GdB

- ✓ raise public awareness. European citizens still are not and don't feel sufficiently involved in the debate on European agricultural and rural development policy
- ✓ serve as a platform for stakeholders in the debate. Because of the Groupe de Bruges' independent position it can serve as a safe haven where conflicting parties could be invited to discuss their views outside of the normal 'battlegrounds' and in this way focus more on what they share in common than what divides them or to offer them new points of view to approach the problem.
- ✓ serve as a knowledge provider and disseminator
- ✓ serve as initiator, facilitator and supporter of initiatives that fit with our vision.

In this sense the Groupe de Bruges is not so much a think tank, but a multi-actor network and the only organisation fulfilling all these functions simultaneously at a European level. This unique position remains necessary in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex European and multi polar setting.

Our ambition: towards a new vision for Europe's agriculture and rural areas.

The current debate is lacking an integrated long term vision on the future of agricultural production and consumption and the future of rural areas. The process to come to a new CAP over the last years illustrates this as it was dominated by short term political (self-)interests and likewise short term commercial interests of certain categories of agriculture and agri-business. The resulting compromises are subsequently put in the hands of technocrats who merely want to make sure that public spending is bureaucratically justifiable.

At the same time we can witness a series of crucial and often interlocking developments from local to global level, that are casting their shadows toward the future. Most of these developments taken individually would already necessitate intensive debate to discuss and offer long term solutions. Taken together, however, they will be decisive for the future of the world already within this generation. This lack of an integrated vision - a vision that could act as an anchor for policy and for management decisions - will only aggravate the problems of today and tomorrow. The wide number of crises the world is in, is further enhanced by a lack of clear governance and good leadership.

The Groupe de Bruges feels that its independent position offers the opportunity to start the much needed debate and offer building blocks for such a vision based on the leading principle of ecological modernisation.

Ingredients of this vision would be:

1. *Demographic developments:*
growth of world population, concentrated in certain areas of the world; ageing of European population, ongoing urbanization and migration
2. *Food security, food safety and food quality:*
the need to increase the level of production to ensure a sufficient, stable, healthy and accessible supply of food, but in a sustainable way, and to reduce food waste. But how? Through ecological intensification or technological intensification? What is the role and responsibility of Europe as the world largest importer and exporter of food.

3. *Agro-ecology, natural resources and biodiversity:*
how to simultaneously increase food production and improve the sustainable management of natural resources and (agro)biodiversity (including local genetic resources)? How to encourage farmers to adopt agro-ecological practices and at the same time offer them the opportunity to make a decent living
4. *Family farming, generational renewal and access to land:*
Family farming still forms the basis of agricultural production inside and outside the EU and is undoubtedly playing a major role in making agricultural production more sustainable and contributing to keeping or creating employment in rural areas . At the same time we can witness that a dangerously low number of farms have a successor, while at the same time big companies and private equity investors make large investments in acquiring farmland. How can family farms be better supported through policy? How can the necessary generational renewal in agriculture be supported? How can access to land for young people from outside agriculture be facilitated? How can the existing diversity in (family) farming systems be turned into an asset?
5. *Climate change:*
how to reduce the impact on climate by agriculture and how to address the consequences of climate change for agricultural production and food security?
6. *Energy:*
How to make the transition from a fossil fuel based economy to one that is based (more) on renewables? How can agriculture contribute to the European goals concerning renewable energy production and reduction of noxious emissions without comprising the food production potential?
7. *Markets, trade and food supply chains:*
Market developments in food and feed commodities, trade negotiations and agreements and their effects, increased volatility of market prices, developments in food supply chains and their effects
8. *Science and technology:*
Among others: GMO, nanotechnology, ICT, the role of science and research and the gap between scientific knowledge and practical knowledge.
9. *The future of rural areas:*
Concerning rural areas we witness a dichotomy: on the one hand rural areas that are becoming depopulated and deserted – migration of rural population to cities and abroad (especially in Eastern and Southern Europe) and subsequently marginalizing family farming and on the other hand peri-urban areas that encounter growing pressure from cities, but also opportunities to come to fruitful and profitable urban-rural linkages.
10. *Governance and civil society involvement:*
Geo-political developments, the changing role of the state, new forms of (self)governance and increasing civil society involvement in relationship to the notion of subsidiarity. The need to build links between rural and urban areas. The role of (food) education.
11. *Policy:*
How can the necessary integration of different policy domains and policy levels be achieved to come to an holistic approach towards social, ecological and economical sustainable agriculture and food production and consumption systems?

How can the public domain regain better control of food supply chains and development and dissemination of knowledge and innovation?

How can the relationship between the public and private domain, between state and market, be recalibrated, in which also the notion of the commons could be reintroduced?

An analysis of these developments will offer the building blocks for our vision. It is then important to focus again on European policies, in particular the CAP. Can the CAP (in conjunction with related policies) be reshaped into a truly green, rural and food (rather than agricultural) policy. What does this mean for the CAP budget and the division of the budget between member states, farmers and between the 1st and 2nd Pillar?

The time horizon for this trajectory is the year 2020 and beyond. First all we want to make an assessment of the distance we have covered over the last 20 years, and put it in the new context by rethinking food, farming and rural policies. In this assessment we have to take account of the complexity that the process of decision making has gained.

Also, we must address the trends of competencies moving from European towards national and regional, from individual beneficiaries to collective, i.e. new cooperative arrangement in the food chain and for the management of public goods and rural areas.

Therefore, we set ourselves two tasks: address the last 20 years and prepare for the post 2020 period in the current and future context in terms of globalisation (e.g. the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement), and rethink the structure of policy making regarding governance and decentralisation.

Our activities: towards a new strategic working programme

Following discussions held in 2013 and building on activities started in the past, we have developed the outline of a strategic working programme. To be able on the one hand make effective use of the 'internal' capital and on the other to strike a balance between ambitions and resources, we opt for a limited number of topics we want to address and work on in the coming years.

In summary:

As said before the CAP and other European policies related to agriculture and rural areas will remain our core business. We will set ourselves two tasks: 1) an evaluation of the CAP Reforms of the past 20 year (starting from the 1992 McSharry Reform) and 2) prepare for the 2020 Reform based on this evaluation and on our overall vision on sustainable food, agriculture and rural areas and integration with other policy domains. When and where appropriate we will use this trajectory to anticipate the new Reform by offering proposals to change policy during the 2017 Mid-Term Review.

Our role as information provider will be strengthened through our communication strategy (see following section) and by evolving our ideas concerning the e-learning academy. In addition we will assess the option to bring the Agiregionieuropa model of the Alessandro Bartola Association to the European level.

In this context we will also continue our working group on the European Innovation Partnership: continue the working group.

Our organisation

Members

The core of the Groupe de Bruges is formed by the network of its members, currently some 50 from 22 European countries, representing a wide range of cultural, social and professional backgrounds, mirroring the existing diversity in Europe. Each member takes part in the Groupe de Bruges on an individual basis, without any commitment neither to the institution he or she belongs to, nor to his or her country of origin nor to any other political interest organisation. In this sense they are committed to the GdB as true Europeans.

Following a member's profile that was established some years ago, Groupe de Bruges members are expected to actively participate in and contribute to the activities of the GdB, either at meetings, the preparation of these meetings as well as in using the different GdB media, website, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter to discuss topics and disseminate relevant information. In this context GdB members are expected to contribute by offering their time, professional knowledge, experiences and networks.

GdB members are also expected to actively promote the activities and the results of these activities within their own geographical area and professional networks.

To capitalise more on the capacities, knowledge and networks of the members it is proposed to form – a part from the already existing EIP working group - additional working groups for three of the five topics described in the work programme: 1) collective approaches 2) land and soil issues and 3) sustainability indicators and real cost accounting. If and when necessary external experts can be engaged.

The CAP itself will remain an activity involving all members, while for the e-learning academy, based on our ambitions, a separate entity will be set up.

Although the current members already represent a wide range of geographical and professional background, we need new members representing not only new countries, but also new professional backgrounds, such as for example: agro-forestry experts, nutritionists, consumer affairs experts, chefs. We also need more young people and women. Ultimately the Groupe de Bruges wants to have one or more members in all countries of Europe.

Board

Over the last years the Board has been expanded from three to four members, giving it a better geographical representation. The Board now meets through Skype 10 times a year, which has helped greatly to give more continuity in activities. In the new set up, in which members involvement is increased through creating working groups, we envisage also some changes in the structure of the Board.

For each working group one of its members should be represented in the Board. The Board is chaired by a president, who is together with supporting staff, also the main responsible for

managing the development of the new vision, the CAP evaluation and the debate to come to concrete proposals for the CAP post 2020.

Staff

The composition of the staff should represent the new strategy and organisational structure. The current staff will not be enough to give sufficient, professional support to both the working groups and the Board and to carry out the communication strategy. To be able to realise the ambitions of our strategy and work programme the Groupe de Bruges will need at least for professional staff:

- A secretary/director to support the Board and, concerning CAP issues, the president, and take care of daily management
- A project manager for each of the four working groups
- A communication officer.

Towards increased visibility and advocacy

Increased visibility and advocacy will be achieved through five interrelated domains:

- 1) *Increased dissemination of output*
- 2) *Improvement of knowledge collection, accessibility and dissemination*
- 3) *Organisation of a larger engagement of wider audience in debates through old and new media*
- 4) *More investments in relationships with new and old partner organisations and with relevant institutions*