

The Europeans
and sustainable food
Qualitative study
in 15 European countries

Pan-European report

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The Europeans and Sustainable food – Qualitative study in 15 European countries – Pan-European report

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Author

Daniel Debomy, Optem

Coordination for the King Baudouin Foundation

Gerrit Rauws, Director
Johan Alleman, Programme officer
Pascale Prête, Assistant

Layout

Jean-Pierre Marsily

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Introduction

- ▶ **The King Baudouin Foundation** has taken the initiative to commission a **qualitative study on the subject “The Europeans and sustainable food”**, as part of its involvement in the international “Sustainable Food Lab” project.
- ▶ **The main objectives of the study** can be defined as follows:
 - ▷ Analyse people’s attitudes, motivations, expectations and (buying/usage) behaviours relating to food.
 - ▷ Understand in depth the cultural background behind these attitudes.
 - ▷ Identify changes taking place, and symptoms of possible future changes in mentalities (in other words socio-cultural changes) that would be in line with sustainable issues.
 - ▷ Analyze how the citizens-consumers understand the notion of sustainable development and the main dimensions of their perceptions of this concept when applied to food and food production.
 - ▷ Identify any factors and/or events which may have triggered/trigger the adoption of different attitudes and possibly different behaviours, in a sustainable food perspective.
 - ▷ From there, develop concepts aimed for the general public, through which the public could better understand the notions related to sustainable food, and could be made more sensitive to and more involved in these issues.
 - ▷ Lastly, test the respondents’ reactions to various tentative “messages” on food and agricultural sustainability and use the analysis of these reactions to improve/modify the above concepts.
- ▶ **The study was conducted in a selection of 15 countries chosen as illustrative of the diversity of European countries and food traditions, using the group discussion method.**

The target population was that of the average urban adults: men and women, aged between 20 and 50 years; one of the groups included people of higher-middle socio-economic and educational level (socio-professional categories of higher and middle management and self-employed professions), the other people of lower-middle level (socio-professional categories of non-managerial office employees, lower level management and manual workers).

The countries included in the scope of the study are the 14 countries contractually agreed with the King Baudouin Foundation, i.e. Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia and Romania – to which Bulgaria was added at the consultant’s initiative.

- ▶ **It was carried out by OPTEM and its network of permanent partners.**
- ▶ This document is the **pan-European report** of the study.

Summary and conclusions

1. This study identifies **three main types of approach** used by Europeans **in the selection of the food products** they buy and consume.

- ▶ An **epicurean and affective** approach – food is perceived first and foremost as a source of pleasure and sensations.

This above all involves “natural” products that have not been processed, and that are judged directly by the senses – taste, sight, smell and touch – and/or indirectly according to criteria emblematic of sensory quality – rural production or geographical origin, trusted local place of purchase, etc. For manufactured products, promises of sensory satisfaction may be conveyed through brand and packaging.

- ▶ A **rational and functional** approach, in which price and consumer convenience or ease of use play a role (in addition to checking of best by date for fresh pre-packed products) for semi-manufactured and manufactured products.
- ▶ A **dietetic** approach – food is considered in terms of its effects on health.

With this approach, aspects of product composition play a role, as does origin: the more “local” the product, the more it tends to be perceived as “natural”, “not tampered with” and therefore healthy – without however stretching as far as biological products, which are recognised as healthy but also generally as being prohibitively priced and, moreover, often as not very tempting in appearance.

The preoccupation of effects on personal health or the health of their children also leads to a concern for ensuring a “balance” through a variety in meals and their composition – independently of the choice of each individual product.

2. **These approaches are present for consumers from all countries** – they may coexist for a single individual, who will verge towards one or the other depending on the circumstances.

Their respective weight varies however.

- ▶ The hedonistic, sensory and affective dimension is especially present with citizens from countries with a strong culinary tradition (France, Belgium, Mediterranean countries, Germany) and/or which are still close to traditional agriculture and rurality (Central and Eastern European countries). Origin and the rural “terroir” aspect are generally highly valued in these countries.
- ▶ Dietetic considerations are more particularly accentuated in Northern European countries (Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Ireland in particular among women).
- ▶ The rational criterion of price is logically more sensitive for economically less well-off social groups, as well as globally for Eastern European countries.

3. **Barely any major dissatisfaction is spontaneously expressed as regards information on food products.** A large number admit they do not generally take the time to consult the details provided on packaging. Those who are the most sensitive to the dietetic approach naturally pay much more attention to them.

Nevertheless, in the responses we are able to distinguish **a certain anxiety or latent mistrust**: as regards product composition or the production process (“chemical” treatments, ingredients, additives, etc.); as regards origin; and the truthfulness of the information provided in these regards. The expectations from such indications are clarification and transparency rather than more abundant information.

4. Food habits result **from a combination of influences**, in which the following play a role:

- ▶ **Personal and family history** – references to childhood and to the cooking of the mother in particular – and collective history – national and regional culinary traditions.
- ▶ **The life cycle**: on the basis of the foundations of the past, we develop our own diet, through continuity or often by adjusting this heritage (or, for some, by breaking with the past).
- ▶ **Family status**: being single generally leads to quite a simplified diet making use of ready meals; marriage or life in a couple is generally a time of stabilisation, regulation and establishment of sustainable food habits; the presence of children commonly leads to a questioning of habits, with in particular a concern for a balanced diet.
- ▶ **Evolutions and changes in society**: economic change, above all in former Communist countries, which have witnessed the opening up of the offer of food products, but for which we also observe latent fears of loss of culinary identity; “globalisation” as a potentially factor of uniformity and bringing about the loss of culinary traditions; modern way and pace of life that favour simplified culinary practices which are for that matter also favoured by the offer of the food industry; pressure of dietary “standards” for eating “more healthily”.

These factors, which serve to explain current behaviours, are also those that play a part in intentions of changing food habits in future: little anticipated disturbance, seeking of a balance or compromise between traditions, constraints and benefits of modernity, and health-related preoccupations.

5. **The notion of sustainable development is not generally familiar** (despite differences from country to country and sometimes from one social group to another).

The European citizens interviewed do however have an intuitive understanding of a certain number of aspects – predominately the **environmental aspect; ethical aspect** (mainly with solidarity with the Third World in mind, as illustrated by fair trade for example); sometimes also the **social aspect** – within the perspective of scheduled change, more harmonious and more balanced, and of a long-term vision.

It is above all the **public authorities** (in the wider sense, including international institutions) that are expected to get involved and that are **considered as responsible**.

Economic actors are generally considered as **having a negative impact** in this respect, as regards large production and distribution companies, who respondents are quick to judge as responsible for the impoverishment of local economies, the disappearance of small-scale agricultural farming and of small-scale shopkeepers considered as the victims of the multinationals – and seen as sympathetic for this reason.

Expectations with respect to agents of socio-cultural change (associations, media, education) are that they play an informative and educational role and exert pressure.

The citizens themselves generally agreed that they “can do something” in theory, but for the most part show themselves to be **quite passive** and little inclined to truly change their habits – due to lack of means, because this requires an effort or because they are unconvinced of their true power to make things different. They are **very much divided between hope and pessimism** faced with the apathy of the public authorities and the all-powerful nature of economics.

6. The concept of **sustainable food** is in itself unknown. Through the previous discussion phases, those interviewed were incited to give it **a positive content**, linked with sustainable development; relating to socio-political aspects, the food production system on the whole (fairer, showing greater respect for the environment) and as regards the food itself (healthier and better for the health).

More in-depth probing on this matter reveals the following:

- ▶ **A rather clear and spontaneous concern as regards the environment dimensions of the issue and health dimensions**, which moreover largely correlate to each other.

The values of food diversity and authenticity may be associated with this (authenticity of “natural” products from rural production, diversity of rural products and gastronomic traditions), although these notions – abstract to some – are not always understood, at least in their connection with sustainable food.

- ▶ **An unequal understanding of the ethical dimension and its field of application:** fair trade for some whose reflection barely goes beyond Third World countries; fairness of terms for the economic relationship between industries and farmers in a broader sense for others; respect for mankind (and animals – rearing conditions); responsibility towards future generations; and also producer integrity vis-à-vis consumers in the information they provide to them and/or the commitments they announce to them.
- ▶ **There is also an unequal understanding of the social and economic dimensions.** They are assimilated with ethics for those who think of the establishment of fair relationships with producers in Third World countries. Respondents in Eastern European countries in particular evoke the prospect of keeping traditional agriculture and the rural fabric alive – but with varying degrees of optimism or pessimism in each case. The social dimension at times includes public health considerations (improvement of the health of the population by way of a better diet).

One of the issues raised in the examination of these various aspects was that of the possible establishment of a **“two-speed” food system**, one for the rich and one for the poor, a sort of “food social divide” of which the prospect is very widely rejected.

7. The concept of **sustainable agriculture**, generally more easily assimilated than that of sustainable food, is strongly linked to it. Sustainable agriculture is at once **a component of sustainable food and its “upstream” basis or source**.

- ▶ Here we observe that a link is spontaneously made with **environmental considerations** (and **health considerations**, which are linked to them), with a more specific emphasis on the rejection of “chemical substances”, non-intensive farming methods, suspicion of practices that distance themselves from these methods, and also on water and energy savings.

Widespread scepticism is, however, observed vis-à-vis “organic” products: doubts over the genuinely organic character of production, suspicions of marketing exploitation of a “trend” and also allusions to risk of “two-speed” food.

- ▶ The considerations with respect to **the values of diversity and authenticity** are also of the same nature as previously – with concern, visible especially in some newly admitted member countries of the European Union, as regards the risk of disappearance of specialised and original types of farming and production.
- ▶ The opinions expressed in **the ethical dimension** are essentially similar to those previously expressed – with in addition a heightened rejection of “manipulations”, and genetic modifications in particular.
- ▶ **The social dimension is clearer and better understood** when it is applied to sustainable agriculture; we also find it is present in the reactions to the theme of **the economic dimension**: ensuring a decent income for farmers, keeping rural spaces alive and supporting more natural and more traditional production, according to a vision that takes long-term considerations into account.

Rather frequent scepticism is, however, observed as regards the possibility of the trend reversal implied by such a development: a utopian image for some given the general economic trend and the orientation of public policy, contradiction or at the least ambivalence for others – in Eastern Europe in particular – given the need to reorganise the agriculture of their country in the direction of greater productivity and increased economic efficiency.

Here the theme of a “food social divide” is moreover referred to once again.

8. As regards the **actors that might be able to contribute to** promoting more sustainable food and agriculture, the following is observed:

- ▶ **A propensity to view small-scale farmers** (as opposed to the “big fish”, intensive producers linked to multinationals of the chemical and food industry and receivers of subsidies). They are viewed as **potential actors in sustainable agriculture, although currently they are for the most part passive** (to a large extent because they are the victims of the system) – provided they receive support.
- ▶ **Widespread suspicion directed towards the food industry**, which is considered to be primarily motivated by the quest for maximum profit, with a tendency to dictate its terms to producers, thereby “strangling” them, and not hesitating to use processes and components that have potentially harmful effects on the environment and on health.
- ▶ **A suspicion of the same kind directed towards** (large-scale) **distributors** also acting in pursuit of profit – **however**, they are seen **as potentially significantly contributing to** the promotion of sustainable food through the key position they occupy between producers and consumers (general information campaigns; efforts to provide information on products sold, their origin, composition, quality marks, etc.; development of ranges or departments of specialised products, etc.).
- ▶ **The public authorities are subject to both high expectations and vivid criticism**: invested with a considerable amount of power, they are also discredited and judged as unreliable in a large number of European countries.

- ▶ **Ever-ambivalent position on the part of the consumers themselves**, divided between a sense of powerlessness and a certain feeling of guilt.

Their attitudes, as we have seen, are spontaneously favourable to the notion of sustainable food or could be rallied to it, but their implementation into a change of behaviours proves to be more problematic.

Indeed, rare are those who state that they take these factors into account in their daily lives: a few purchase organic products (with a concern linked to their health much more than to the environment) or buy directly from the producer (predominantly motivated by a desire for authenticity and sensory pleasure), and a larger number have taken to buying fair trade products (though only for selected products).

As to the future, almost all seem to be sensitive to the issue, but acknowledge the low probability that they will break away from “force of habit” in the absence of strong external stimuli – in addition to the fact that the price of sustainable food, generally considered to be clearly higher, constitutes a considerable stumbling block.

- 9.** Given the overall results of this study, we are able to state the following:

- ▶ **That there is an overall European awareness of issues relating to food** – beyond the differences that may be present between the citizens of the various countries for certain points.
- ▶ **That the dimensions for the interpretation of these issues as explored in the group discussions are indeed the dimensions that structure attitudes.**
- ▶ That in order to increase consideration for sustainable food, **the problem in Europe is not an absence of awareness of what is at stake** – this is widely present – **but the translation of these attitudes into changes in behaviours.**

- 10.** This is confirmed by **the analysis of the reactions of respondents to the short texts presented to them** at the end of the discussion, intended to raise awareness of the question of sustainable food by approaching it from various angles and using various tones.

- ▶ **In essence, the most efficient vector in awareness-raising is no doubt constituted by the correlation that is somewhat spontaneously mentally established between environmental preoccupations and health-related preoccupations.** The former type of preoccupations leave their mark on attitudes but as yet still have little influence on habits; the second are more susceptible to make them change. **These dimensions are also linked to those of authenticity and diversity**, which represent strong cultural values for Europeans.

To sum up: a healthy food is balanced (and consequently varied) food produced in a manner that respects the laws of nature (and is therefore authentic and a provider of sensory pleasure); this may of course involve manufactured products, which we would not be able to do without in the modern world and whose consumer convenience is valued, but made up of ingredients and production processes “without tampering”.

- ▶ **Secondly, Europeans may also be sensitive to the trio of ethical, social and economic dimensions** which are broadly interlinked.

An ethical agro-food system is, among others, a system that enables individual farmers to carry out their activities instead of being “smothered” or “strangled” by the all-powerful economic machine of mass production, industry and large distribution companies. Although the former are for the most part currently considered as passive, and they are generally not given a free hand in this respect, it is they who are seen as the potential actors for more sustainable food and agriculture in the future – provided they are assisted, supported and motivated sufficiently so as to set off down this road.

- For these two main axes, **citizens may be made more aware of the long-term implications** that would be brought about by the pursuit and strengthening of the current trend towards non-sustainable food.

One of the signs of this is the manner in which the last of the texts submitted was received, a text which forcefully evokes the risks of irreversible degradation of natural resources if humanity continues to “play at being the apprentice sorcerer”; even if not all accept the tone, which they consider to be overly “dramatic”, the majority feel they at the least relate to this appeal in favour of the precaution principle.

11. The examination of the welcome received by the various texts in addition allows for the formulation of the following considerations as regards the **tone of message** likely to inspire adhesion.

- **Avoid pathetic emphasis and sentimentality.** Efficient messages may naturally, and probably should, include affective aspects, but these should be conveyed on the basis of facts presented in a rational, objective and balanced manner.
- **Avoid use of imperious and moralising tone** – this may detract from the credibility of messages, which are then viewed as political or “advertising” “slogans”, accusing and even disdainful (for those who fear that the establishment of a sustainable system will lead to a “two-speed” food system, from which they themselves will be unable to benefit through lack of means) for citizen-consumers.
- **Avoid evoking overly radical changes** which may lead to anxiety and moreover appear non-credible and even undesirable – in any event non-inspiring. It should not be a question of making a radical break with the industrialised agro-food sector by confining activity to an “organic ghetto”, but rather of gradually causing the sector to change and reform.

This is also a condition in bringing average citizens, who feel largely powerless to make things change – and whose conscience is secure in hiding behind this powerlessness – to gradually become more aware that they can themselves contribute through their own personal initiatives and even their most modest of actions, but which can contribute to a change in the right direction.

12. **For the various actors of the system** who are likely to play a part in its development, the results suggest:

- **For European public authorities**, that they should be better able to demonstrate how certain components at least of their agriculture, environment, public health and consumer protection policies are oriented towards greater sustainability.

These components currently appear to be very little known, and the authorities concerned (at European and national level) are not widely trusted, in a general climate of lack of appreciation for policy-makers and a tendency to distance oneself from politics.

- ▶ **For industries and distribution companies** (themselves the object of suspicion in a context in which citizens are increasingly concerned at the “excesses” and “abuses” of economic liberalism) there are opportunities to develop products, ranges and store departments, and even types of store, that are more in line with the desired change towards more sustainable food – making sure, however, that they do not “overdo it”, and to avoid giving the impression of pure marketing exploitation of a “fashionable” trend, by abstaining from “pompous” advertising slogans, which are not credible and would turn out to be counter-productive, but on the contrary explaining and justifying their assertions and promises by means of increased transparency.

Detailed results

Chapter I

Selection of food products and information sought

1.1 CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF FOOD PRODUCTS

- ▶ For the most part, the **principal criteria for the selection** of food products are observed to be largely homogeneous from one country to the next, and from one social group to another. Only their ranking and respective weight differs, characterising the personalities of the countries, and quite distinct types of consumer and preoccupations.

We are thus able to define **three general categories of approach**, some criteria can be common to several types of approach and the approaches may be combined to varying degrees:

- ▷ **A sensorial approach, emotional, “epicurean”**; food is first and foremost perceived as a source of **pleasure**. People appreciate the **taste, appearance, freshness, texture, colour, flavour** and **smell**. These criteria are by preference applied to generic, “natural”, non-manufactured products – vegetables, fruit in particular, and fresh meat. Not always able to be grasped directly, these sensory qualities may be understood by means of more global criteria, such as:
 - **Origin** of the product – country or region, rural production from a specific area, especially for fruit and vegetables, with a frequent preference for national or local products.
 - **Place of purchase** – “their” preferred butcher, “street” markets, and even the producer themselves.
 - In addition, the “seduction” and “temptation” factor may also be reflected through the **brand** or even the **packaging**, “nice”, “attractive”, as this is a promise of the **sen-sory** satisfaction sought.

“I usually buy things, which aren’t packed. If it’s a bakery product, it can’t be in any foil, in case of meat, it can’t be wrapped on a tray either. Because I can touch it through a bit of paper and check if it’s fresh. And if something is packed, it has artificially extended durability.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

“I look at the product, if it has strange colours, or strange smells, I will not buy it.” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“By looking at the food, the colour and if there are stains or not on fruits for example, one gets an indication whether it is fresh or not.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

“It is better at the farm than in supermarkets” (France. Higher-middle social group)

“Frankly, what matters most to me is that it tastes good, that I feel like eating it ... When I see something that looks tasty, then I fall for it ... no matter if it is not 100 % good for my health” (Germany, Lower-middle social group)

“I buy what I feel like. If I feel for fried potatoe cakes (Reibekuchen), then I buy potatoe cakes, so in the end it’s very much what I feel for” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

▷ **A rational, functional approach;** the food must comply with common extrinsic rules, which go beyond the product's specific characteristics, intrinsic to its nature:

- **Best by date**, systematically checked for all **packaged** products, particularly dairy products and meat.
- **Price**; this approach is always to be considered from a point of view of **saving money**, “advantageous” prices, and good “value for money”; in this respect, it may be directly associated with a **type of distributor**, supermarket or, increasingly, “discounters”, or a **brand**; a few also declare themselves to be fans of “special offers”.

“I buy bread at Consumer [a supermarket], because it is made by Panrico, and it is cheaper” (Spain. Lower-middle social group)

- **Convenience and ease of use**; this more specifically involves **semi-manufactured or manufactured products**: this may also involve the type of distributor (functionality of supermarkets in which the act of purchasing is concentrated, are close to home or deliver, etc.), and also products that are easy to prepare – semi-prepared, frozen or half-cooked meals, pizzas, etc. – this criterion is mainly put forward by single persons (choice of “size” of packet and of products in proportion), by “stressed-out” employees, especially a number of women, who consider they no longer have time to devote to cooking.

“I am a discount store fan, quality does not matter to me as long as I am saving one euro. I do all my shopping at Aldi and Lidl. I only go elsewhere if there is something that I absolutely cannot find there” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“I am a ravioli fan and I can say that they are much better at Aldi than the Maggi ones which cost more than twice the price” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

“With the little time we have, we have lunch outside, in the evening we make do with ready made dishes, deep-frozen food, ready made vegetables, and we do proper cooking during the week-end” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

“In the beginning, when I was just married, I made more experiments. I even went to hard discount stores, and then I became more selective and turned to hypermarkets, I prefer branded products with a level of quality, there are some chains in particular that pay great attention to the consumer” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

“I prefer the large stores where I can find everything – of the supermarket type, mainly Billa. And near my home” (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

“I am quite lazy. For me, being single, it is important that when I cook it should be fast and easy. So pasta is fine with me.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

“Especially during the weeks when I work, it is important that what I prepare does not take too much time. The children are hungry and I am tired. So the combination of fast and easy suits the whole family.” (Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

- ▷ **A “dietetic” approach;** food is here considered in terms of its **effects on health**. It is interesting to note that this preoccupation is present in almost all countries and is increasingly cited as more or less a “priority” concern, both in general, and more specifically for those with children. With this approach, attention is paid:
- **To the composition of the product, and to its various ingredients**, as well as their respective quantities.
 - **To fat and sugar content**, often consulted in a general manner and more specifically in the context of a diet (“light” products), cholesterol or diabetes, or for allergy sufferers (avoidance of allergenic products).
 - **To the presence of “chemical products”, preservatives** (the “well-known E numbers”), **treatments administered** (pesticides) and **GMOs**.
 - **To origin** (country, region), with a clear tendency to choose national or local products, the impression being that such products are less “tampered with” and more “natural”, especially in some Eastern European countries where the agricultural tradition is still lively and close at hand (parents or grandparents living in the countryside who are farmers or tend a small garden).
 - **To “organic” character**, mostly associated with a “healthier” aspect, but often judged to be prohibitively overpriced. People sometimes therefore limit themselves to eggs and milk, especially since organic fruit and vegetables, apart from their price, often also are not particularly appealing or appetising in their appearance.
 - Lastly, irrespective of the selection of each individual product, **to meal diversity and diversity of meal composition, i.e. the notion of “balance”**.

“I try to avoid buying juices and ice-creams for the children because I have heard that they contain harmful “E’s” ” (Greece. Higher-middle social group)

“It’s good [organic food] but they are so expensive, aren’t they? They put so much more on top of the normal price... I would do it if it were cheaper.” (United Kingdom. Lower-middle social group)

“In my opinion, in general we should buy products that have been “treated” as little as possible. As natural as possible. “Bio” or whatever you want to call them” (Romania. Lower-middle social group)

“Bio products are very expensive. Paying nearly 2 euros for a bio cucumber, that is a lot – plus, sometimes, bio vegetables and fruit do not look very appetising” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

- ▷ To sum up, the following can be observed for these **general common criteria**:
- Countries with a strong culinary tradition – France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Greece, Germany – and/or still close to traditional agriculture – countries of Central and Eastern Europe – immediately, more than others, position themselves on the **“hedonistic”**, sensorial and emotional side; in these countries, the words “taste”, “flavour” and “smell” are amongst the first to be mentioned.
 - As we have already pointed out, the **“dietetic”** approach is present in all countries, but it is especially emphasised in Northern Europe – in the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Ireland particularly as regards women. It is more widely present in oth-

er countries where consumers seek to have a balanced diet – for instance in Spain where concerns about weight problems seem to have increased recently.

- The **price** criterion is much more present, understandably, in lower-middle social groups, as well as in Eastern European countries (where it is observed that “organic” products, often assimilated with national and local “natural” production, are exposed to competition from products imported at highly competitive prices).
- ▶ In a more scattered and marginal fashion, either concerning few countries or a small number of people in each country, a few **more peripheral criteria** can play a part in the choice of food:
 - **Advertising** either in their own consumption or due to children in the family arguing for the purchase of such-and-such a product or brand.
 - **Consumer magazines**, which perform tests and give advice.
 - **The press and television programmes**, especially those hosted by celebrity chefs (Jamie Oliver in Great Britain, for example), and articles or programmes with a medical character, with specialist doctors, dieticians and nutritionists.
 - **Fair trade** – often associated with organic products or those mentioned by people who already buy organic products – which appears to remain very much “reserved” to a limited number of types of product (coffee, chocolate) and only involves a small share of the population (particularly in Belgium).
 - **Nutritional value**: this mainly involves women, either for themselves (diet), or due to a concern for the nutrition of their children.

1.2 DEGREE OF SATISFACTION AS REGARDS INFORMATION ON PRODUCTS

- ▶ As a general rule, there is **no great dissatisfaction** as regards information on food products. The vast majority of those interviewed consider that the useful information is available: essentially best before dates, the principal ingredients, preservatives, fat and sugar levels, etc.

In addition, a large number of respondents admit that apart from the best before date and the price, they barely read the labels at the point of sale, more often than not buying by habit and/or putting their faith in the retailer or store.

“You don’t always have the time to read, you do it out of habit, you buy things you know” (France. Higher-middle social group)

“I don’t keep myself busy with looking for information. I know what I want.” (Belgium. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ The most frequently cited **omissions** are as follows:
 - **Precise origin**; specifically, the mention “EU country” is judged insufficient, in particular by reference to the recent health scares (BSE and other “scandals” specific to certain countries, for example the “paprika scandal”, whereby the labelling read “product of Hungary”, but the product was in fact from Brazil and included a toxic ingredient), or to ambiguities as to the real origin of the product.

"I wanted to buy Estonian biscuits and I discovered that these were not produced in Estonia, only the package was!" (Estonia. Lower-middle social group)

- Mention of certain **allergenic** products.
- **Inadequate translation** or absence of translation into the national language of labels for certain imported products (particularly in the new member countries).
- Poor **legibility** (characters too small) or use of incomprehensible codes or terms.
- **Information on the production process**, use or non-use of **pesticides**.
- Information is **too "dense" or overly complex**.

- ▶ **A more general criticism is less concerned with the information itself than with its credibility** and potentially "misleading", though "lawful", character, which implies that large groups and their "lawyers" are able to comply with the legislation whilst getting around it at the same time. We therefore often observe a **latent**, if not explicit, **mistrust** as regards producers and distributors. It should be pointed out that this mistrust currently seems to be more pronounced in former communist countries, which are still little accustomed to the labelling practised within the European Union.

"I wouldn't trust the producers because basically the information is put on by the lawyers in terms of what they can get away with. Recently there's been the whole Sunny Delight thing – this stuff is good for your kids when in fact it's nothing but sugar." (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

"In my youth, we didn't have the "Es" and all those sorts of information on the packages!" "Information which ordinary people could understand is missing. There should be someone there to explain it. Government people and shop keepers should provide this information. It should be posted – and explained. It should be in the media" (Romania. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ Overall, dissatisfaction appears to be expressed more frequently in certain countries: Hungary (including many questions on the truthfulness of information, and great sensitivity to origin); Spain and Greece at least among part of the population (credibility of information and controls); the United Kingdom (ingredients/composition).

"They only tell us what they're interested in. If we knew how everything was made, we wouldn't buy anything" (Spain. Lower-middle social group)

"Three are great interests involved in these industries. They have their way of bending the laws if they want to" (Greece. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ **In future**, it appears that people above all expect **the generalisation of a few considerable improvements**:
 - Increased clarity and simplification of labelling (legibility, comprehensibility).
 - Precise mention of origin.
 - Mention of treatments used (for fruit and vegetables in particular).
 - Presence or otherwise of GMOs

Chapter II

***Food habits and
their development***

II.1 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE FOOD HABITS

- ▶ Current food habits are the result of a combination of influences, for which **strong common factors** are found in all countries:
 - The **past**, both “personal” history and that of the family and social background of origin, and “collective” history, national and regional culinary traditions.
 - The **life cycle** and changes with respect to **private life** – gaining of autonomy, leaving the parents’ home, moving, new environment, etc. – or to **the social order** – evolutions and changes in society.
 - **Family status**, living within a couple or alone, presence or otherwise of children, age of children, etc.
 - **Age and state of health.**
 - The **media** and prevailing trends – especially the growing weight of the movement towards “dietetics”, “healthy eating” and “having a varied diet”.

From these strong common factors, each obtains a **specific balance** between tradition and modernity, between personal tastes and the background of socio-cultural trends.

- ▷ **The past.** It is clear that, in all countries and irrespective of social group, **personal history** and especially **childhood** leave a strong mark on the food habits of individuals, whether what has been passed down is continued with – at least in part – or, on the contrary, the opposite course is taken.

All respondents make reference to family meals, to parental culinary “culture”, and to the cooking of the **mother** in particular – grandparents are also frequently mentioned.

“Thinking about it, I don’t eat fish. It’s because my mother never cooked any. Fish is something you must have grown up with” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

“I grew up in the countryside and traditions are based already on my grandmother. From that time I eat milk dishes, yoghurt, jelly meat, potatoes, pea soup, all such rural dishes. I even do not look at trash food. I eat black bread and drink beer” (Estonia. Lower-middle social group).

“I grew up with milk and cheese from the country, although only from cows. I grew up in the country, with a devotion for dairy products. I did not change when I moved to the city. I was consistent. I have also kept soup” (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

“My mother always cooked a roast on Sundays, so I still cook one for my kids” (Ireland. Lower-middle social group)

“Our mother paid attention to healthy food, nothing was prepared on grease, everything was prepared on water – but it did not have any taste.” (Czech Republic. Lower-middle social group)

Sticking to or reproducing meal styles and menus inherited from the family tradition appears to be particularly marked in the words of the respondents in Italy, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Romania, Ireland (among older consumers), Poland and Estonia (as regards the latter, notably in the lower-middle social groups). Quite a few people also refer to this in other countries (including France, Belgium and Bulgaria), yet more often with the idea that things have changed and present-day practices are more distant from those past habits, which are seen with a degree of nostalgia.

- ▷ **National and/or regional traditions** are naturally strongly linked to personal experience: respondents either express a form of national pride, favour a given culinary heritage, flavours, smells, dishes, ways of cooking, etc., specific to the country or region or locality, or, on the contrary, abandon or reject them.

Their influence appears particularly strong in the Mediterranean countries, France, Hungary, Romania, Estonia (in the lower-middle social group – simple but much liked traditional meals) and the Czech Republic (with nostalgia about “disappearing” traditional dishes).

“At home we try to eat freshly prepared dishes, with Bulgarian products; we are for returning to the good traditional Bulgarian cuisine” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social group)

“The stew my grandmother from Córdoba cooks is not the same as the one my mother cooks here, chickpeas...everything tastes different, much more...authentic” (Spain. Lower-middle social group)

“I am from the Krkonoše Mountains and food had to float in grease there. I cannot eat it today. When I have a steak, then it is dry and also dry potatoes.” (Czech Republic. Lower-middle social group)

- ▷ **The personal life cycle.** On the basis of the foundations of the past, the vast majority of respondents develop their own diet, through continuity, or, in most cases, by adjusting this heritage in accordance with their way of life, their preferences and their own experiences:

- **The gaining of autonomy**, the time they leave their parents’ home, for some represented a change of environment (arrival in a town or city) or in **purchasing power** (“broke” student); for others it represented a form of liberation from family habits and a transitory period of unbalanced and even chaotic diet – “it is a time of noodles and pizza”, “you eat any old how”.

“I think it’s all my mother’s fault that I am overweight now! We weren’t allowed to touch a chocolate bar when we were growing up, and as soon as I moved out I used to eat them morning, noon and night!” (Ireland. Lower-middle social group)

“Today we can afford to eat meat and fresh vegetables. This was not always the case.” “I have just moved from home. I tend to eat a lot of macaroni, spaghetti and tomato sauce... It is fast and cheap.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

“Before, when I was studying, I was disorderly and living with no rules, and then I got used to observe well defined meal times, and beginning to work helped me have a more regular diet” (Italy. Lower-middle social group)

- **Encounters and travel;** in all countries, we observe a mixture of references and a multiplication of experiences.

“My food habits owe much to my mother. She was a housewife, she had always cooked, she always cooked what we liked. Later I lived abroad, so you inevitably learn to like other cuisines. Right now I am living with my girl friend. Of course she has other habits... so I can taste other things” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“During our trips to Thailand and other parts of Asia, we have learned to love the food. There are stores to buy ingredients, and even in the regular Swedish grocery store one can find spices which were not heard of a few years ago.” (Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

“Meeting with” the gastronomies of other regions of the world (Asia, Middle East, Latin America ...) – either from travelling there or as a result of restaurants being opened in one’s own city, or ready made meals now being available in stores – is a feature particularly mentioned in countries of the Northern part of Europe: the United Kingdom, Sweden, Ireland. Some young Spaniards also mention it.

- ▷ **Family status.** This is naturally one of the most frequently cited and most determining factors that can lead to a change in food habits:

- **Being single** is generally associated with quite a simplified diet, necessitating little or no cooking (ready meals), or with evenings out with friends and meals in restaurants.
- **Marriage or life in a couple** is generally a time of stabilisation, regulation and establishment of sustainable food habits.

“I lived for a long time with a girl who was vegetarian and very dietetic-minded. It made me think, and I adopted some of her principles. I continue to do so, although I now live solo again” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“I used to live of fruit and vegetables, but since I have been living with someone who does not eat any, I have had to change my habits” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

- Lastly, **the presence of children**, commonly leads to a questioning of habits; respondents seek to raise their appetite, partially giving in to their preferences, and to impose rules that respect a **balance** in nutritional content – a **varied** diet, including in particular fresh fruit and vegetables, dairy products, vitamins, etc. – and **regularity** of meals – three per day, at more or less fixed times. In this respect, many insist upon the fact that they have to curb their offspring’s tendency to frequent “fast food” establishments and to take to “bad food” and “junk food”.

«Outside of home, the children go to Mac Donald’s or KFC, or other fast foods, as if they were programmed to eat this type of food only. We must strive to change these food habits. That is why at home we try to eat freshly prepared meals with Bulgarian products, we are for returning to the good national Bulgarian cuisine” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social group)

“Traditionally, porridge and sandwiches for breakfast because of my child. Lunchtime is between three and four: soups and chicken dishes, fruits in the evening. My child has an important influence here” (Estonia. Lower-middle social group).

"We take more bio products for the children, for their health" (France. Lower-middle social group)

"My child loves fast half ready noodle soups and I really have trouble with that. During the bus trip I can eat them but in everyday life I don't. They do not taste good and contain ingredients that are not healthy" (Estonia. Higher-middle social group).

▷ Evolutions and changes in society

In all cases, such change represents the background canvas on which food habits are spread, influencing the practices of each individual to varying degrees, whether the change is embraced or rejected:

- **Political and economic change** which, in certain countries, has led to true upheaval – disappearance of a "scarcity economy" and a "tinned food economy" (Bulgaria, Poland, etc.), of "cooking from leftovers" (Ireland), admission to the European Union, flood of new products, new "cuisine", fast food chains, etc., all are changes that at times lead to ambivalent attitudes: latent fear that culinary identity will be lost and, on the other hand or at the same time, satisfaction at the abundance and variety of the offer and the discovery of unfamiliar cuisine and new products.

"It's different now. There are some innovations. It seems to me that now there are much more dishes than previously. There are some novelties. Formerly I ate just pork chops, minced meat and cabbage. And that was it. Now there are lots of possibilities." (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

- **"Globalisation"**, perceived, in a more general manner, as potentially having a harmonising effect, which could lead, in the long term, to the disappearance of all national, regional and local particularities, at the risk, according to some, of the instalment of a generalised "McDonaldisation", with the **loss** of certain specialities and traditions among the younger generation.

"Earlier you had scents coming out of the kitchen, it attracted you more, and who now knows about the seasons of the fruit and vegetables, we have lost the taste of things" (France. Lower-middle social group)

"Certain things are disappearing – like tripe butchers" (France. Lower-middle social group)

"The original taste of vegetables like tomatoes has been lost ... even if someone succeeds to grow it in his own garden, it is not the same any more" (Greece. Lower-middle social group)

- **The "modern" way of life:**

- **Lack of time**, "stressful" urban environment, demanding professional life, encouragement to adopt new behaviours; "skipping" of meals (breakfast, lunch), "snacking", choice of products that "make life easier".
- **Women who work**, the "double working day", which also favours simplified, quicker culinary practices.

"We are also gradually going to become a little more ... Western ... Whether we like it or not ...it's the future. Under the influence of Western fashions the Romanian woman will stay less and less in the kitchen" (Romania. Lower-middle social group)

- **Extensive nature of the food industry's offer**, ready meals or semi-prepared meals, servings adapted to all family sizes, new methods of cooking (microwaves) and food storage (deep freezing, freezing), meal home delivery services.

"Food companies have already realised how susceptible we have become to the "easy solution" of junk food and they are taking advantage of it to make profit" (Greece. Lower-middle social group)

"We are going to individual portions, but I prefer things that are shared between the family" (France. Higher-middle social group)

"I remember my grand-mother's house, the scents when we were preparing jams together with mum from freshly picked fruit, when we were preparing aubergines, peppers boiled in vinegar and then put in oil jars. Now, my parents put everything in the deep-freezer ..." (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

"Now you have an empty refrigerator and a full freezer" (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

- **Development of hobbies**, sport and cultural outings, which, for some, has changed their pace of life, which encroaches on the time they are able to or want to devote to meal preparation.
- **Pressure to comply with "dietary standards"**. This aspect crops up time and again, for all countries. This trend towards eating "more healthily" is focused on four key principles:
 - Introducing more **variety** into your diet, in particular multiplying fruit and vegetables.
 - **Reducing intake of fats and sugars** (sometimes also salt, or herbs and spices).
 - Eating **less meat** (less red meat in particular), and more poultry and fish.
 - **Staying slim**, eating less, fewer dishes "swimming in sauce", fewer delicatessen products, cutting out alcohol.

This concern for diet may, of course, have been triggered by personal problems related to health or ageing, but, in truth, it appears very widespread and omnipresent, involving both the young and older persons, men and women (although women go on a diet more often than men), and all social groups. We also note that **obesity** is often perceived as a risk against which we should protect ourselves. In some cases, the film Super Size Me reinforced this impression.

Examples on the theme of "eating more healthily" were many.

"We now pay more attention to fat: we have almost done away with chips and replaced butter by extra-pure olive oil". "Since childhood I had loved fried food, we had it at home, now it has practically disappeared from my diet" (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

"First I had some worries about my cholesterol. I followed a diet that made me lose weight, and our daughter does not eat any meat. From there, we began to give priority to vegetables and white meats" (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

"I am often sick so I watch it." (Czech Republic. Lower-middle social group)

"I think I view it all as an obligation. I want to live many years" (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

"I eat a lot of stews but now I eat "low calorie" lentils, without sausages, or lard and with more vegetables" (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

"This starts when you're 40, in the company medical check-up, when you see your cholesterol is way up high" (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

"I do not eat anything fried – sausages or chips. It came as I grew in age: since I became older, I have realized that my body does not resist everything any longer" (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

"I have changed everything and I have returned to healthier cooking, with more vegetables, less feculents and when I have guests, I go back to my old habits and I like to cook some couscous" (France. Higher-middle social group)

"They are talking a lot of "aliments". They communicate more on the health issue, there is a psychosis of cancer, or diabetes" (France. Lower-middle social group)

- ▷ **Influence of the media.** They clearly have a part to play in societal change, which they have helped to spread and promote or on which they have commented. In this way, the "light trend" and the trend towards slimming, and the development of "organic products" considered to be healthier, "untampered with", and to have better vitamin retention, etc., owe a lot to media communication.

II.2 PROPENSITY TO CHANGE FOOD HABITS

- ▶ For the most part and in the near future, **those interviewed do not show strong and determined intentions to radically change their diet.** In any event, the possible factors that might lead them to a change in their habits resemble those we have just examined, i.e., and in particular:

- Change in their personal situation, an encounter, marriage or living with a partner.
- Having children.
- Desire to lose weight.
- Illness (cholesterol, diabetes, etc.).

"I do not know what could change my habits now ... Maybe when I have a child I will also eat what he/she eats, what he/she will need" (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

"I can't see mine changing to be honest. I guess in future certain things might become scarce or impossible to get at some point. You might not eat beef any more if there was a scare about beef so yes, you would have to change in that respect. But otherwise I can't see mine changing that much." (United Kingdom. Lower-middle social group)

► Beyond these circumstances of a private nature, the vast majority observe that **these great overall changes are collective and have already taken place**, they are, moreover, often considered as irreversible:

- Socio-cultural ways of life and changes that favour the abandonment of culinary practices and traditional dishes, and that have led to changes in regular meal times and length of meals.
- Loss of taste of products, and of “true” flavours (intensive agriculture and rearing), products on sale “out of season”.
- Increasingly varied agro-food industry offer (ready meals and frozen meals), for which it may be considered that the quality is improving.

“Life is different from 20 years ago. Now we accept to spend 2 hours in transport each way to have something better (a home), we eat pizzas in the evening, we have no more time” (France. Higher-middle social group)

“It seems to me that in a dozen years or so you won’t buy meat to do minced meat, but there will be just ready-to-eat meals. I will just use what will be served to me. I may not have time to prepare meals or I won’t feel like preparing it. The kitchen will become a place to sit in (not to eat in or prepare meals). The kitchen will be just an addition to a flat.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

“I cannot tell with words the difference between crops grown in your own garden and the ones bought at the supermarket.” (Hungary. Higher-middle social group)

“We have much more diversity, much more choice, they make life easier” “Yes, there are more products, a continuous tend, it’s tempting, there are more temptations” (France. Lower-middle social group)

► **In future**, the majority of respondents plan to eat better and more healthily, or to continue their efforts in this respect. The rest express desires that often have the appearance of pious hopes, which all aspire towards **a better sense of well-being** – in terms of pleasure or better physical fitness:

- Rediscovering the flavours of childhood, for example by favouring organic products (particularly if the financial situation improves), “farmyard” purchases (particularly in Central European countries in which links are often kept with relations “in the countryside”).
- Intention of establishing an improved balance in their food habits: making an effort to eat “hot” meals, at set times, not “skipping” breakfast, having it “with the family” more regularly.
- “Taking the time” to cook, and even to take cookery classes.
- Returning to traditional dishes.

- ▶ To a marginal degree, the following is also observed:
 - In a few cases, increased attention is paid to the **origin** of products, following the health scares of recent years.
 - A select few people show a specific concern for the **protection of the environment and for production methods**.

“I have stopped buying products and brands that are published in the Greenpeace list” (Greece. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ To conclude, we emphasise that the propensity to change one’s food habits **always occurs with reference to perceived background change**:
 - Maintaining, or returning to, “their” – national or family – traditions as a reaction to the standardisation or westernisation of food habits – countries with a strong gastronomic tradition, or societies recently “opened up” (Central European countries).
 - “Following” the movement of “modernisation” and opening up, not without pleasure (discovery of new products, new cuisines, flavours, etc.) or with a certain sense of fatalism (“that’s modern life for you”, etc.).
 - Embracing the “dominant” trend towards “dietetic” concerns.

Chapter III

Perceptions of the notion of sustainable development

III.1 UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT

- ▶ The concept of **sustainable development is not generally a familiar notion.**

In some countries most (or all) respondents do not seem to have any familiarity with this concept, or (for some of them) they have only heard the words without having any clear view of what they stand for: Germany, Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria notably.

In some others, the words appear a little more familiar, although the people interviewed do not spontaneously give them a precise meaning: Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Ireland.

In others, the same applies to many of the participants of the lower-middle social groups, but those of the higher-middle groups are more aware: France, Belgium, Poland, Estonia and Romania.

Lastly, the words sustainable development are spontaneously better – and more precisely – understood in two of the countries studied: Sweden and the Czech Republic.

- ▶ Beyond this weak and highly disparate knowledge of the expression itself, the majority of respondents intuitively afford it **rather rich and pertinent content.**

- ▷ **Development of an “ecological” character:** this is the most immediate, almost unanimous (although not mentioned in Bulgaria), understanding of the notion. This character itself involves a range of rules and practices; it is a form of development that:

- Takes the laws of nature into account, and that produces “as naturally” as possible.
- Reduces or abolishes recourse to polluting products, chemical substances, pesticides, fertilisers, etc..
- Is attached to environmentally-friendly production, which does not exhaust soil capacity (sometimes reference is made to a return to the practice of leaving land fallow) and preserves soil fertility.
- Saves on energy (reduced transport) and water use.
- Encourages recycling, sorting of rubbish, reforestation, etc.
- Protects biodiversity.
- Is concerned with future generations.

“Preserving the soils and nature, there is a Green concept behind this; less pesticides, preserving the earth to have better food” (France. Lower-middle social group)

“Obtaining all we need without damaging the environment” (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

“Development closely related to and guided by nature, environmentally friendly” (Greece. Higher-middle social group)

“You know the way the farmers used to plant clover in a field for a year to put nitrogen back into it... I suppose that is part of sustainable development” (Ireland. Higher-middle social group)

“For me sustainable is related to environment. For example that I wash dishes right after the meal in order not to use substances that cause allergies. And in order to protect our land” (Estonia. Higher-middle social group)

“In case of nature it means limiting consumption, how it influences future generations” (Estonia. Lower-middle social group)

During this initial and strong association with ecology in the broad sense of the word, natural **organic products** are mentioned in numerous cases and often tend to be assimilated with national and even **local** production. They are then also credited as being “of better quality” for your health (their own health in particular). Here we find, once again, more or less explicitly, the “health” preoccupation as previously referred to in the above chapters.

“I suppose they mean eating healthy food?” (Belgium. Lower-middle social group)

▷ **A form of development that redefines the relations between rich and poor countries, a concept that is linked to “fair trade”:**

- Purchase at a “fair” price – that is to say one that allows the producer to live “decently” – for production in developing countries.
- On-site assistance, support for “small-scale” local producers, protection of their own seeds (rejection of GMOs), maintenance of traditional production and rearing.
- Shortening of channels, reduction of intermediaries.
- More generally, the creation in a broader manner of the necessary conditions for Third World development: cancellation of debt, the fight against corruption in these countries, measures to eradicate world hunger, etc.

“It’s about protecting local farmers all around the world, local growers, protecting them with fair trade so that they can continue to exist and grow without being bought out by mass production. I think it’s about empowering local production on an international basis” (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

“Buying at higher prices from certain countries for them to have a decent life” (France. Higher-middle social group)

It is interesting to note that this notion of **“another” form of solidarity** between the “Western powers” and the “Third World” is expressed in the most developed countries of our sample – Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Spain and Ireland. The Czechs also refer to this notion. In the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe – Poland, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria – we observe as regards “sustainable development” the feeling that their own country is in a situation of imbalance vis-à-vis “Western” countries. In this respect, a few respondents consider that national and local production should be subject to a form of “protectionism”, that multinationals “are destroying” the domestic economy, that foreign investors “repatriate” their profits, and that these changes have been, for some, “the losers of the transformation” – much too radical and too swift, something of a forced march. In other words, their country needs to benefit from sustained support in its economic development through the Community solidarity policies.

“Something is developing, but slowly. It systematically goes further, but doesn’t jump. There are no big differences, jumps.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

“Social policy should work better in Hungary. People shouldn’t be fired from agriculture because foreign goods are imported.” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“Tax reductions for plazas, and then they just leave the country suddenly, having obtained enough profit.” (Hungary. Higher middle social group)

“The foreign investors’ money always goes abroad. It does not stay here, so our country will always stay behind. We are happy to go and shop at Metro, but the money disappears. It is sustainable development for them, not for us. In order to do something for ourselves, we must create and invest in our own businesses, and the money will stay at home.” (Romania. Lower-middle social group)

- ▷ **A form of development with a “social” character**, in particular from a viewpoint of safeguarding jobs. In this respect, sustainable development may be understood as a form of “anti-globalisation”, at the opposite end of the scale from delocalisations and unemployment. This dimension is however mentioned much less spontaneously overall.

“It should be a concept for the economy. The noble middle path in a country’s economy. To produce a lot and to keep people in the labor market.” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“A lasting development, with pledges made not to move the business out of the country” (France. Higher-middle social group)

- ▷ **The wider idea of a form of development designed and planned to be relevant, harmonious, balanced, and regular.**

It can involve political, demographic, economic, social, scientific, educational and cultural dimensions as well as the environmental dimension, the notion of urban as much as rural planning, etc.

This wide conceptual perception is notably present in the minds of many citizens of Central and Eastern European countries – the most clearly in the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria – as well as Ireland to a lesser degree.

For some of them, the respondents concerned apply this notion to development on a world-wide scale, while others think at least as much of the future development of their own country.

III.2 **IMPLICATIONS OF THE QUEST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

- ▶ The conditions considered to be necessary in the quest for sustainable development involve the following:
 - Public and political authorities, States and governments and international, national and local bodies.
 - Socio-economic actors, small, medium and large enterprises, distributors and producers.
 - Agents of socio-cultural change, associations, media, education.
 - Citizens in general, both consumers and citizens.

- ▷ **The public authorities** are almost always cited, and often in first place. Their role is at once to give impetus to the movement, to define its rules and to monitor their correct application. The following are mentioned:

- Naturally enough, States and in particular the most powerful among them – the United States, the European Union – likely to implement support programmes for underdeveloped countries, check the destination of aid, combating corrupt regimes and working alongside “non-dictatorial” states.
- Politicians capable of regulating the system, in particular “ecologists” likely to favour production with low ecological impact, and to encourage a reduction in the exploitation of resources.
- Some supra-national bodies such as the World Bank, G8, etc.

“The government needs to do something about it. The supermarkets have a monopoly and the government have a big part of that. Unless they are going to jump off the bandwagon and give local communities and retailers the resources they need so ... big corporations don't buy the small shops out.” (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

“This means lower prices, fewer middlemen, better information on country of origin, and the people will agree to pay a little more for these products” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

- ▷ **Socio-economic actors.** The following should be distinguished:

- **Large companies, large-scale producers, large-scale distribution**, parties involved in the system but which are not generally perceived as practising sustainable development. In the majority of cases they appear to be directly responsible for the impoverishment of local (particularly agricultural) economies and the disappearance of small companies, small-scale producers and retailers. Advocates of sustainable development have to fight against their lobbying.
- **“Small-” and “medium-scale” producers and “farmers”**, especially those of “poor” countries: they are seen as the victims of the multinationals, and should be supported by sustainable development in order to improve their level of income and life conditions.

- ▷ **Agents of socio-cultural change:** everything that is susceptible to exert pressure, inform, convince and teach:
 - “Ecological”, “consumer” and militant associations, working in the neighbourhood, in a concrete manner.
 - All the media, a considerable factor in circulation, explanation and debate.
 - Schools, teachers, educators of the young generations.
- ▷ **The individuals themselves, as consumers and citizens.** As potential actors in sustainable development, the respondents take up various standpoints. All or almost all agree that they “are able” to do something, but not all are prepared to “truly” change their habits and behaviours, a large number state that they are not prepared to (or do not have the means to) “pay more” or question their true capacity to change things, unless “everybody” changes.

To this viewpoint, some are convinced that, on the contrary, they are – or could be – a highly active driving force of change, provided they “act en masse”, have recourse to “boycotts” where necessary and “assume their responsibilities” both as consumers and as voters.

“If my contribution is made easy then of course but I do not feel like I would like to think about it every day. Prices for ecological products should be cheaper or the same as for other products” (Estonia. Higher-middle social group).

“Contributing to the development of the poorer countries, the so-called Third World, through responsible trade and responsible tourism, you can travel to the Southern hemisphere without going to four star hotels, but staying with local families instead ... programmes that are finalized with support from ethical banks, microcredits to help them start a small business... There is no point in sending aid to corrupt governments who fill their own pockets with it and leave their own people starving” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

- ▷ To sum up, **the concept of “sustainable development” – for all countries and social groups combined – evokes notions and valued key words that give rise, on the whole, to positive attitudes.** It involves:
 - Long-term vision.
 - “Reasonable”, “responsible” process, in proportion – no anarchy or exaggeration – which is controlled.
 - Respect for future generations.
 - “Justice”, reestablishment of a balance of wealth and resources between developed countries and poor countries.
 - Respect for human beings.

which are all dimensions that correspond, more or less explicitly, and in a more or less involved manner, to widely-shared aspirations.

On the other hand and at the same time, a number of critical or sceptical attitudes present themselves:

- Risk of drifting towards a type of “two-speed” consumerism, with sustainable development products, especially food products, considered or supposed to be “more expensive” and not accessible to all;
- Unachievable “utopia”, faced with the power of multinationals that are above all hungry for profit, or the shortcomings of certain States, in a “modern” civilisation that is under the grasp of “materialism”.

“We citizens, what can we do? We know nothing, we are only exposed to the big multinationals’ advertisements.” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

“It is bound to fail; everyone is just looking for his own comfort, starting with power available from the plug, that no one worries where it comes from. Overall, the rich countries’ consumers don’t care a bit” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“We are heading straight to one food for the rich and another for the poor” (France. Lower-middle social group)

“Sustainable development does not work anywhere as the world is too materialistic.” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“It sounds very nice, but the US still has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol!” (Hungary. Higher-middle social group)

► **Currently, respondents are generally sharply divided between pessimism and hope, between a personal feeling of powerlessness and belief in a potentially decisive collective power.** The majority feel they lack:

- Clarification, information and awareness-raising concerning the objectives.
- Facilitation of individual actions.
- Assurance as to the beneficial effects for themselves and the intended beneficiaries.
- Availability, legibility and guaranteed credibility of sustainable development products, accessible cost.

“This is a gigantic challenge!” “I think this is like Don Quichotte...” (Belgium. Higher-middle social group)

“We should not be totally pessimistic, there are some slight moves being made, everyone should be made more aware of what he can do, even on a small scale” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

Chapter IV

***Attitudes with respect
to sustainable food***

IV.1 SPONTANEOUS PERCEPTIONS OF THE NOTION OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD

- ▶ The notion of “sustainable food” is wholly unfamiliar, for all social groups and all countries, and sometimes leaves respondents rather confused.
- ▶ However, the previous stages of the discussions incite the respondents to associate it with that of “sustainable development” and it is generally broken down into positive dimensions:
 - ▷ Some are of a **socio-political** nature and are concerned with **the food production system** as a whole:
 - **Fairer distribution of resources.**
 - **Better remuneration for producers**, particularly those of “Third World” countries, sometimes the desire is expressed for a reduction or abolition of subsidies to European agriculture.
 - **Abolition of overproduction**, reduction of waste.

“We should change our minds about it, with the EU’s common agricultural policy we are ending up importing everything, we are forced to import and we are throwing away what we produce here, milk, tomatoes...” (Italy. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ **Eradication of world hunger.**

“Sustainable... It would be great if everyone could eat twice a day, even in those countries” (France. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ **Support to underdeveloped countries, self-sufficiency and autonomy aid.**

“Thinking globally, sustainable food would also mean a different distribution of resources. For exemple if we think of our kins in the African countries, in many Asian countries who just cannot manage to feed themselves properly, we should help those people because we do have food, even food surpluses. Not giving them the fish, but rather the fishing rod, helping them to do some irrigation, as they say in Egypt” (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ **Respect for the environment** in production and distribution (energy, restriction of transport, packaging, etc.).

“Today we read a lot about transportation all across Europe. This has to be debated and stopped.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ **Rearing methods that show respect for animals.**

“The treatment of chickens, cows and pigs is to my mind important when discussing sustainable food. We want meat of good quality, but without harming the animals.” (Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

- ▷ Others are concerned with the food itself:
 - Food that is **“more natural”, “less industrial”, organic products**, no use of pesticides, preservatives and GMOs.
 - Better quality, “healthier” food, that is **better for the health**.

- ▶ The notion also gives rise, to a lesser but not marginal extent, to a few **negative dimensions**:
 - “Two-speed” food, one type for the rich, the other for the poor.
 - Organic products that are too expensive, not very appetising, and do not keep for long.

“I buy what looks attractive and good.” (Belgium. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ Lastly, **some misunderstandings** can be observed.
 - “Long-life” products, whether basic (flour, sugar, rice, etc.) or freeze-dried (“in a pouch”).
 - **“Durability” of food obtained by chemical treatments, addition of preservatives**, food that is “chemical” and unnatural.

“If the products are to be more durable, that will mean even more chemicals” (France. Higher-middle social group)

“From the EU’s point of view, sustainable food means more sophisticated « Es ». I was reading in a newspaper that they have invented some sort of latex or rubber which imitates meat. That’s what I am thinking about, that they produce additives which imitate natural aromas, only trying to make them less toxic than they are today. I can’t see anything else” (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

“Let us take Danone as an example. It is durable food that does not deteriorate, and is always the same, but that is not a quality because this is due to preservatives. I reach the conclusion that it is a sustainable (durable) product. More natural foodstuffs are less “sustainable”. So, sustainability is not a quality” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social group).

IV.2 DIMENSIONS OF THE NOTION OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD

IV.2.1 Environmental dimension

- This is the dimension **most often spontaneously associated** with sustainable food by the majority of respondents. The association is direct, credible, and unproblematic.

Respect for the environment at once evokes the following:

- Production methods that do not exhaust soil, do not pollute and do not use pesticides, fertilisers and chemical products, and rearing practices that show a respect for animals – sufficient space, adapted diet, slaughtering techniques, etc.
- Precise regulations and serious checks.
- Distribution allowing for savings in energy consumption (reduction of distance and length of transport) and waste production: reduced packaging, biodegradable or recyclable.
- Consumption of products “in season”.
- Preservation of resources and soil for future generations.

“If the packaging is glass, carton or plastic” (Spain. Lower-middle social group)

“Natural food products, pesticide-free, not putting animals in places where they cannot even breathe” (Spain. Lower-middle social group)

“Low amount of chemicals, only such that it wouldn’t be harmful. In order not to exaggerate with ham’s colour and production date.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

“More farms and less battery-type warehouses” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“Bio farms are common in the West; it is much better there” (Czech Republic. Higher-middle social group)

“From the environmental point of view it should be as little package as possible. And kind of packages, plastic or paper, should be considered as well.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

This dimension is present in all groups and all countries, although rather less strongly in some of them: Italy; Spain where the respondents appear to focus mainly on food packaging; and the United Kingdom where few other aspects are mentioned – and where involvement in the environmental dimension in general also appears particularly weak.

IV.2.2 Social dimension

- ▶ The social dimension of sustainable food is both **less evident** and more **ambiguous** than the dimension dealt with above. In some of the groups (notably lower-middle) the participants even show themselves to be very uncertain, or they engage in debates which actually deal with other topics (public health, the environment again...).
- ▶ The “social” aspects linked to sustainable food are indeed rather **diverse**, not very homogeneous and not always viewed in a positive light.
 - **Development of “fair trade”.** This is one of the most highly valued “social” aspects. Producers – and those of Third World countries in particular – ought to receive a fair price that allows them to live decently, keep their farmland and not migrate to towns and cities. This is mentioned notably in Belgium, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, and more hesitantly in the United Kingdom.

“Fair trade is really a social dimension to this. To make sure that the food has been produced in a good labour environment, during reasonable hours and not by children is exactly this.” (Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

“The Third World deserves a fair chance.” (Belgium. Lower-middle social group)

“It could make it possible for some people to keep their farm” (France. Higher-middle social group)

- **Improvement in the health of populations**, increase in life expectancy.
- **Maintenance or development of agriculture and rural areas.** Reference is made to revitalising rural areas, the arrival of “new” farmers, and the creation of jobs. It is mentioned in particular in Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Romania and Bulgaria.

“They’ll do that manually, not by machinery. In more natural conditions.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

It is also present in Hungary, but with pessimistic views: mechanisation is seen as irreversible, with its consequences on job losses. People tend to consider that demand is first and foremost “quantitative” and that production able to meet increasing needs is necessarily “intensive” and “industrial”. Some of the Belgian and French respondents also evoke, from a slightly different viewpoint, the issue of protecting small farmers.

- **Bipolarisation of consumers: those who are well-off and those who are disadvantaged.** In this respect, sustainable food appears to be a source of increase in social inequality, sometimes even with long-term effects on health (not resulting from sustainable processes). Among others some French, Czech, Estonian and Bulgarian respondents mention it.

“It will deepen the gaps” (France. Higher-middle social group)

“Rich people eat organic potatoes grown in Estonia while poor people eat apples grown and in Poland using fertilisers. Genes of those people mutate” (Estonia. Higher-middle social group)

IV.2.3 Health-related dimension

► Along with the environmental aspect, **the association between sustainable food and “health” is clear**, “evident” for some, and amongst the most motivating aspects.

- **Elimination of chemicals and preservatives, potentially factors in illness**, “carcinogenic” according to some; the idea of potential risks deriving from treatments and manipulations of the products in the food chain is fairly widespread. In the same line of thought, GMOs are explicitly mentioned in several countries.

“Dioxine chickens and mad cow!” (Belgium. Higher-middle social group)

- **Individual and collective well-being.**
- **Healthy products, less “junk food”, less obesity.**

“The cleaner and chemical free is the food the healthier I am and when one day I will have children I would not be happy if they did have health problems because I have had bad eating habits” (Estonia. Lower-middle social group)

“The way things used to be made, cheese, preserve.. They taste true to nature and have no artificial ingredients.” (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

“If mankind continues to feed from fast food, public health is likely to be durably affected”. “For instance, I have read that in the United States there are so many people overweight that they have to build larger coffins. It is a public health problem that has economic implications” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

In this regard, perceptions are rather homogeneous across groups and countries.

IV.2.4 Ethical dimension

► **This is one of the most controversial dimensions** because:

- It gives rise to **highly contrasting levels of personal involvement**, some consider that ethics relates above all to the responsibility of producers, decision makers, large groups, etc., while others state that they are very much involved personally.

“Big (agrofood industry) groups just don’t give a damn” (France. Lower-middle social group)

- It is disconcerting to a number of those interviewed, who do not see the link with the notion of sustainable food.

“Pffff. This is a difficult one.” (Belgium. Higher-middle social group)

“..... (long silence).....” (Belgium. Lower-middle social group)

► For the most part, **this dimension is concerned with:**

- **Fair trade** once again, but here centred as much on **work, production and raising conditions** as seen just from an angle of a “fair price”. It is mainly mentioned in Western European countries.

“If I bought something now I wouldn’t know either way whether it was sustainable or not, for example, you wouldn’t buy fish from Spain if it wasn’t a sustainable food ... but you wouldn’t know that. Unless things are marked better from where they come from then what can we do?” (United Kingdom. Lower-middle social group)

“Things like importing mange tout that children have been forced out of their beds first thing in the morning to pick. Like battery hens for instance, those are the ethical factors. That’s why I switched over to roaming hens instead of battery hens, but now I’m thinking are any of these roaming hens any happier and how free range are they?” (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

- **Sometimes, also, fairness of the terms of the economic relation between industrial companies and/or farmers and their employees** (in their own country, not only vis-vis the Third World).

“I watched a programme about one of the largest Bulgarian producers of vegetal oil, margarine, etc. The employees have to work in terrible conditions, trapped in there 20 hours per day without a day of rest and miserable salaries. It’s a torture for those people. I will never buy their products again, even if they are advertised on television everyday” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social group)

- **Producer honesty, truthfulness of information, strict compliance with announced commitments.**

“It is important that producers would not lie to me. If they say that the product is clean then it really is clean” (Estonia. Lower-middle social group)

This idea is expressed in particular by respondents in countries of Eastern (Poland, Hungary, Estonia, Romania) and Southern (Spain, Greece) Europe – with frequent doubts given businesses’ prime aim to seek profit.

- **Responsibility towards future generations.**

“If we want our children and grandchildren and coming generations to be able to live on this planet, we have to consider what kind of life we live, and what we do to the land.” (Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

► **This is a dimension that remains somewhat abstract for a large number of citizens**, who recognise that it is a preoccupation “with principles”, not necessarily easy to put into practice, for which people are not truly ready to “pay more”, or who believe that “ethical” behaviour will be more of a concern for young people and future generations.

“When we sit at work and sometimes discuss these kinds of questions, it is much easier to be ethical, than when standing in front of the shelf in the grocery store. Then it tends to be the same products as always.” (Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

IV.2.5 Dimension linked to values of diversity and authenticity

- The notions of “diversity and authenticity”, are not always well understood, at least as regards their relation with sustainable food; moreover the link between these two dimensions is not something obvious to everyone.

“These are difficult words ...” “I don’t see the link. As long as what I eat is tasteful and healthy...” (Belgium. Lower-middle social group)

“We are not competent in this area. You should ask other people for this type of analysis” (Italy. Lower-middle social group)

- In some countries, it brings to mind **the key notion of “terroir”** (i.e. specific area particularly “gifted” for certain food productions), and safeguarding and valorising regional or national specialities.

It is quite clearly the case in France, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria as well as Spain (behind slightly different words) and, less spontaneously, in Ireland and in the higher-middle social group in Belgium (the other Belgian group has more difficulties to understand the concept and its implications).

Italy can be added to these countries, although the particular focus of the Italian respondents on the issue of development of and establishment of fair relations with the Third World initially blurs the picture – yet, once they go beyond this limited perception, the Italians rightly evoke controlled origin marks. Some of the Estonians also come to mention the notion of origin indirectly.

Support to (small) local producers against mass production is sometimes explicitly related to this understanding of diversity.

The more general and vaguer idea of non-uniformity appears in the words of German and Swedish participants (whose views in this respect are positive). It can also be detected in the Polish groups – yet they tend to perceive sustainable food products as being a limited “top of range”, therefore not very diverse.

As regards the British, they merely think (and not easily) about the diversity of food supply coming from all the countries of the world (but in no way about any specific “terroirs” in their own country).

- **As regards the notion of authenticity** it is related to that of **preservation of bio-diversity** or more generally **genuine products**.

In addition to the earlier mentioned countries in which diversity, authenticity, and the link between them are spontaneously understood, mention is made of it in Germany, Poland and Estonia.

“Could you imagine buying olive oil from Småland? No, it has to be Italian. The variety is in itself something very positive, and has to be encouraged, if not for anything else, then for the European perspective.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

“Which kid these days knows what a cow looks like, except for the violet Milka cow!” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

“Chopska salad, for instance, can only be prepared in Bulgaria. Abroad, the cheese, the vegetables, not mentioning the grilled peppers, are quite different” (Bulgaria. Lower-middle social group)

“In Spain we have a variety of climates. Some things will grow better in some parts than in others” (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

“If a certain product grows better in one region, it probably tastes better as well” (France. Lower-middle social group)

“I am thinking of certain cereals or certain potatoes that have a better yield if they are grown in certain areas, they have higher quality, like those having the IGP or DOP mark over here, but I can’t see any relation with the health issue” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ It should be noted that for these two notions of diversity and authenticity, we observe **questioning** and **criticism**:
 - Scepticism with respect to the “reality” of product authenticity, hence the re-affirmed need for checks and serious and reliable labelling that is easily identifiable.
 - Risk of drifting towards “fashion”, “snobbism” exploited by marketing.
 - Risk of high prices and elitism.

“Authenticity goes together with a certain standing” (France. Higher-middle social group)

IV.2.6 Economic dimension

- ▶ **Reactions to this last dimension are diverse and complex.**
 - **In some countries, promoting sustainable food is related to the perspective of economic development of sectors of agriculture and agro-food production which would devote themselves to it**, and keeping alive or revitalising the rural communities.

This perspective is clearly – and favourably – mentioned in Poland (where the success of food product exports since joining the European Union can already be seen), in Romania (“quality” agriculture is perceived as a key factor in the economy), Bulgaria and Greece.

There are less clear signs of it in the words of some Frenchmen (supporting quality agriculture, on the basis of strict rules) and some Italians (improving the situation of the producers by shorter distribution channels).

This question is also touched upon by the participants of the Hungarian and Czech groups, yet with great **scepticism** – owing to the higher prices of sustainable food products, the inability of (small) producers to adapt to the constraints imposed by large distributors or the massive trend towards industrialisation and profitability at all costs. This idea is also shared by the Estonians of the lower-middle group – whereas those of the other group appear more likely to consider more comprehensively potential positive effects on farming, public health, etc. In the Swedish groups,

similarly, the respondents question the policy of multinational companies, which they see as encouraging mechanisation – and with great doubts as to the ability of Swedish agriculture to be competitive vs. imported products.

The question of aids to a more sustainable form of agriculture is posed in several countries with diverse views being expressed: favorable in some countries, critical in others (for example, Irish people remembering the European agricultural surpluses).

- **In this connection, some people hardly think of anything else than fair trade and fair economic and commercial relations with the Third World.**

It is the case of some of the Frenchmen, many Italians, some British respondents (in the higher-middle group) who criticize the behaviour of multinational companies in this respect (references to GMOs “imposed” to poor countries, or Monsanto ...).

- **The issue of the prices – assumed to be higher – of sustainable food products, is raised again in several countries.**

Some people (in the more well-off groups) would appear to be ready to accept (slightly) higher prices in exchange of the personal or collective benefits that they would expect.

Others, conversely, fear prices which would not be affordable by everybody, a “social divide” related to food, a growing gap between one type of food for the rich and another for the poor – notably in France and Belgium.

- **From another perspective, some people mention the issue of durable resources – thinking of fish:** some of the Belgian, British and Spanish respondents (the latter expressing anger against French fishermen who, according to them, do not observe the common rule established at EU level).

“I am sure that in one way it is economical for multinational companies to produce food in large scales. But, what about unemployment in the various countries? In the end it might not be good at all, not from an economic point of view, and not when it comes to quality and variety of products for the consumers.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

“There is a direct relation between sustainable food and economic development ... But in my opinion, it is the economic aspect that rules over food, not the other way round” (Romania. Higher middle social group)

“Quality doesn’t matter, just quantity to gain more and more profit.” (Hungary. Higher middle social group)

“A small drop in a sea of passive people, but it is important to raise awareness, perhaps we have gone too far and we have to find an acceptable compromise between rich people who eat well and poor people who eat badly” (France. Higher-middle social group)

“I have three children and even though I know that ecological food products or home-grown food would be better, I must buy what is cheap. The children now eat a lot and I cannot afford more expensive food.” (Czech Republic. Lower-middle social group)

“There are people ready to pay more for this kind of food. But here are also those who can not afford the higher prices, especially not young people, families and senior citizens.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

“Farmers get aid from us, in fact one should set up criteria to be filled to obtain it” (France. Higher-middle social group)

“If young people were given motives, they will go back to the province and contribute, I know I would ” (Greece. Higher-middle social group)

“Generally, if our food is sustainable, good, it may influence our country, if we are famous for it. We may export it to other countries and there will be economic growth here.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

IV.2.7 Other dimensions

- ▶ Very few are raised spontaneously.
- ▶ The following may be cited:
 - in Hungary, the evocation of an **“ethnic”** dimension (in fact a variant of the “authenticity” aspect), a desire to see “identities” and “typical” national production supported, particularly in the case of Hungary;
 - in Italy and the Czech Republic, the **“supra-national”** dimension, and the necessity – absolute in the case of sustainable food – of involvement on the part of “world” bodies and authorities of the UN, G8 variety;
 - in the Czech Republic, the **“educational”** dimension and the importance of education.

Chapter V

Attitudes with respect to sustainable agriculture

V.1 SPONTANEOUS PERCEPTIONS OF THE NOTION OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

- ▶ In the vast majority of cases, **“sustainable agriculture” is understood as a component of sustainable food, or as its “foundation”, “upstream”**. Sustainable agriculture is therefore more limited field than sustainable food, which for its part includes the production, transformation and distribution of food products – but it is the source of sustainable food.

In general this concept seems easier to understand than the more abstract concept of sustainable food.

“Agriculture is the starting point of food, sustainable development is a strong point: at the beginning, I show you then you do farming, and you consume, later on I pay you to have your products, and this brings you to food” (Italy. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ Both notions therefore generally elicit **spontaneous reactions, content and comments that are rather similar**, and have already been mentioned:
 - **Preoccupation with the environment** – rejection of pesticides, use of natural fertilisers, responsible water management, energy savings.
 - **Non-intensive farming methods**, in the **“organic”** mould – preservation of “small” farms, respect for soil fertility, recourse to fallow land, etc.
 - **Giving priority to natural and “local” character** – production adapted to regions, respect for seasons, return to “traditional” varieties, no “off-land” production, no GMOs, etc., preservation and maintenance of landscapes, etc.
 - Preoccupation with **health** – healthier, non-toxic products, etc.
 - Desire for **fair remuneration of farmers**, more balanced exchanges, a “win-win” situation, particularly for farmers in “poor” countries.

“Can we have the difference between ‘sustainable agriculture’ and ‘sustainable food’? We’re getting confused.” (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

“For me it is important that farming will continue in both large and small scale.” (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

“Sensible management of food production process, so that a consumer receives a healthy product, and a farmer earns on it.” (Poland. Higher-middle social group)

“It’s about being non-GM because GM is definitely not sustainable. But I don’t know enough to make a distinction between the various bits.” (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

“Sustainable agriculture means that the land will continue to be cultivated by our farmers, and that the landscape will not change too much.” (Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

“Introducing sustainable food would create a win-win situation. A farmer could produce food in such an amount that he could earn and survive. And a citizen could buy it and afford it.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

► Beyond its convergence with sustainable food, **sustainable agriculture gives rise to specific attitudes:**

- In a large number of cases, there is a greater **“sentimental proximity”** with the subject, as if the theme at once was “close” to the human dimension – the farmers –and the “sensorial” dimension – increased reference to taste, flavours, smells – and reconstituted a greater sense of belonging to a “land” or to a community – “our” farmers, “our” agriculture, “our countryside”, etc.

“It is the local environment, it is more explicit, you can see the real work” (France. Lower- middle social group)

- With this frame of mind, especially **in Central and Eastern European countries, the emphasis is placed on the current state of “their” agriculture and on the necessary developments, reorganisation and support that it demands.**

“At the present time, the Romanian agriculture is right at the bottom thanks to the country’s leaders of the last 15 years who allowed the destruction of the irrigation system, the technical base – right now the land is tilled using a plough and a horse. Without government subsidies – the best examples being France and the United States – without long term loans, our agriculture will never be sustainable” (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

“We are extremely backward. We have fertile land, but it is tilled in a primitive way. In Spain they pick tomatoes with a ladder because they are more than two meters high, whereas over here the old women can hardly pick three tomatoes in their garden” (Bulgaria. Lower-middle social group)

“Czech agriculture is in unfavourable condition. It is difficult for Czech farmers to stand tough competition in conditions of open market and their primary problem is to survive” (Czech Republic. Lower and higher-middle social groups).

- In these same countries, we sometimes observe **fears, criticism or demands as regards European agricultural policy:** unfair subsidies, countries “favoured”, “disloyal” competition from imported products, risk of domination of local agriculture by “foreign groups” (we note that these criticisms also arise in older Member States).

“They [European Union] do not pay for smaller ones. They are simply pushed out. They pay only to bigger ones. It is all reducible to prices: if the State does not favour smaller farms then those places where people want to do something and enable us to buy healthy products are eradicated” (Estonia. Higher-middle social group).

“Before we could buy Estonian potatoes how is it so now that we have only Italian and Polish ones?” (Estonia. Lower-middle social group).

“There is a danger involved: foreigners coming, because in Romania land is cheap, and they would use the fertility of the Romanian land for their own benefit” (Romania. Lower-middle social group)

"I get so upset. The French farmers demonstrate in the streets and on the roads as soon as something is not to their liking. They get so much financial support from the European Union. The Swedish farmers get less, but would need support in order to continue farming" (Sweden. Higher-middle social group).

- ▶ It should be observed, however, that **in most cases the European citizens do not question the basic principle of aid to agriculture** (or to small farmers, or to farmers heading towards quality), but some of the modalities of European aids (of which they know little in fact) – or their fears that their own country's agriculture could not resist competitive pressure as a result of its lack of organisation, modernism and effectiveness.

V.2 DIMENSIONS OF THE NOTION OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

In a very large number of cases we find evocations and comments that are very similar to those made on the subject of sustainable food. Put simply, they are sometimes more focused on a given aspect, with more "specific" connotations (on "nature" or "farmers").

V.2.1 Environmental dimension

- ▶ **The association, let us reiterate, is evident and spontaneous.**

In addition to the aspects previously mentioned in the chapters on sustainable development and sustainable food, we point out the emphasis on:

- **Water**, irrigation problems, wastage, pollution caused by nitrates.
- **The issue of fertilisers and pesticides**, which exhaust soil in a durable manner.
- **Climatic aspects**, anxiety as regards changes, global warming.
- **Deforestation**, which must be controlled, reforestation.

"Water has to be regulated, and drip irrigation systems built. We can't waste any more water" (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

"In Castilla, oats; in Murcia, irrigated vegetables... and so on... the right crops in the right type of land" (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

V.2.2 Social dimension

► **The social dimension appears clearer and better understood than is the case for sustainable food;** it remains completely obscure only to the British; it essentially involves the following:

- **Ensuring decent income for farmers**, making agriculture “economically” attractive, rejuvenating the rural population, maintaining or creating jobs.
- **Supporting “alternative” production**, non-intensive, “more traditional”.
- **Preserving rural spaces and diversifying:** “green tourism”, cooperatives are set against large-scale agro-food groups.
- **Developing direct purchases from farmers**, and/or shortening channels, with support to local products, energy savings (no transport required).

“If people do not have land to use what sustainability we are talking about. Smaller farms should be supported. It also means that more people have work to do and there are less excluded people to take care of ” (Estonia. Higher-middle social group)

“If a farmstead meets some conditions, it receives some subsidies and people stay in the countryside, deal with stock-farming, cultivation, etc. This is a social dimension because farms develop.” (Poland. Higher-middle social group)

V.2.3 Health-related dimension

► **Here we observe all the evocations previously noted:**

- Products without use of pesticides, non-toxic, no GMOs, organic (or more organic) etc..
- Improvement of their own health.
- Improvement of public health, fight against “modern” health problems – obesity, high blood pressure, cancer.

In the same way, however, **scepticism** is also shown **as regards organic products** – “trend” or “true health improvement”? Reliability of information and checks? – and also risk of “two-speed” character for food and health.

“It is more natural, less industrial, not the result of a whole process, so, to me, there is a real benefit” (France. Lower-middle social group)

“If there are less chemicals used, we’ll eat smaller amounts of them. We’ll be healthier. We won’t need to spend so much money on doctors and medicines.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

“Good food implies good health. Well, try buying good food and half of your salary is gone!” (Hungary. Higher-middle social group)

“I do not believe in “bio”. “Bio” is a shrivelled apple that costs three times more ...” (Belgium. Higher-middle social group)

V.2.4 Ethical dimension

► As is the case for sustainable food, **the following elements are evoked:**

- Association with fair trade, with a particular focus on “southern” farmers in certain countries.
- Expectations as regards the honesty and “decent” principles of the producer (truthfulness of information supplied on farming and rearing methods, sometimes also fair treatment of their employees).
- Responsibility towards future generations (no overproduction or exhausting of soil and sea resources, etc.).

In addition, the following is also observed (perhaps following repetition of the question):

- Accentuation of the **rejection of genetic modifications**, which are here more distinctly perceived as a menacing transgression.
- Repeated **scepticism** on the reality of the ethical preoccupations of individuals and nations, self-centered, “increasingly egocentric”, a more marked sense of a **utopia**.

V.2.5 Dimension linked to values of diversity and authenticity

► Here again, **the following themes are raised:**

- Respect for and protection of biodiversity.
- Development of farming and rearing in the regions that are best adapted to provide the best possible quality, preservation of local specificities, varieties, breeds and seeds (“rural products”, “typical” specialities).

“I can picture it as a succession of small monopolies. Here silk, there oats, over there the maize ... Not to turn the local population into slaves, but to prepare them for a better future” (Italy. Lower-middle social group)

- Respect for seasons (“no strawberries at Christmas”).

As regards the evocations associated with sustainable food, sustainable agriculture raises the following aspects **in addition:**

- The sense of having a duty of transmitting to their children a lively relationship with “natural” products, in their environment.
- Relative anxiety, particularly among some newly admitted members of the European Union, as regards the risk of disappearance of their specific, original and exclusive production: Czech apricots and potatoes, Bulgarian yoghurt, Irish potatoes, etc.

“Nowadays, all foodstuffs are produced industrially – in Holland, in Spain, in greenhouses. We hardly know about anything else ourselves already. Our children should know that cauliflowers grow in the earth, not in trees” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

“The EU wants to ban our tripe soup, but we must keep our traditional foodstuffs. Foreigners like them and we can make ourselves known with these foodstuffs. So far example, the Japanese know about Bulgaria because of the yoghurt which they like very much, because it makes you live longer” (Bulgaria. Lower-middle social group).

The items quoted are overall rather homogeneous from one country to the next (except, again, the United Kingdom where these concepts appear to be little understood by most citizens.)

V.2.6 Economic dimension

► **The content of the economic dimension of sustainable agriculture generally overlaps with that of sustainable food.** We observe the same hopes, but also the same doubts and question marks;

- “Long-term” policy, plans for a better balance between rich and poor countries.
- Reasonable prices that ensure better remuneration of farmers.
- Support and positive reforming of national agriculture (particularly in countries of the former Eastern block).
- Reorganisation of channels from producers to consumers.

And also:

- Scepticism and wait-and-see attitude, sense of “utopia” – for example in France, Germany, Hungary, Estonia ...
- Consumers will not be prepared to “pay more” (“diktat of low prices”).
- Higher costs, products not accessible to all: the idea of the food “social divide” mentioned earlier, which appears here again particularly in France, Belgium, Poland...
- In some countries, “EU agriculture subsidies” are not always viewed in a positive light, fears that local products will disappear, particularly on the part of newly admitted countries, image of a European agricultural policy that is not committed to “sustainability” (no support given to “alternative” agriculture).

“Fair pricing, limits to the carrier’s margin, the market, the farmer.... There must be a limit to the margin” (Spain. Lower-middle social group)

“Maybe fewer middlemen, and thus maybe lower prices” (France. Lower-middle social group)

“It will be more expensive, it is a way of increasing prices”. “The big groups are not ready to reduce their profit margins” (France. Lower-middle social group)

“Quality doesn’t matter, just quantity to gain more and more profit.” (Hungary. Higher-middle social group)

V.2.7 Other dimensions

- The following are evoked to a very marginal extent:
- information and education for farmers;
 - information and education for consumers;
 - actions aimed at young people (making mentalities change);
 - encouraging experts to remain in the field (agriculturists, veterinary surgeons, etc.);
 - development of “green tourism”.

“Farmers do not have financial means for advertising or other ways of providing information; information is important in the present world and economy, they cannot assert themselves without it. The State should help them with this.” (Czech Republic. Higher-middle social group)

Chapter VI

Perceptions of the role of the various actors and expectations regarding them

VI.1 FARMERS

- ▶ Farmers are naturally perceived as potentially **privileged actors** in the system, **however** they are **at the same time judged to be powerless** as regards exerting an effective influence on it.

"I think there is the problem with the fact that today, society is all about money... It's that whole BSE thing, I don't think that was the farmers' fault, it was the government telling them what to feed the cattle. I don't really know how much power they had over that." (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ In the context of sustainable agriculture, the following are distinguished:

- **The "big fish"**, profiteer accomplices of the chemical industry ("polluters") and the agro-food industry (multinationals), above all guided by profit and "subsidy gulpers", which are almost unanimously **criticised**.
- **The "small fry"** who, on the contrary, have a **positive image** on the whole, appear as the "victims" of the system, impoverished, yet among which a minority, highly valued and advocates of "organic" agriculture, assimilated, in this case, with "sustainable agriculture", which offers better products; some – in the minority – have the means and the possibility of buying them "directly" from the producer.

"They (the biggest ones) are professional, like the bankers, in it for the money... sustainable agriculture does not matter one bit for them" (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

"In the long run, there will be no small farmers left because their products are too expensive compared to mass production" (France. Higher-middle social group)

"They have no say on prices, they are being strangled by the distributors, Aldi, Lidl" (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ On the whole, they are therefore considered as a "link in the chain" and **expectations are essentially directed towards the public authorities** of whom it is asked that they provide farmers with more assistance and in a more discerning fashion in producing in compliance with the rules imposed by sustainable agriculture.
- ▶ **This appeal for support to be given to "sustainable" farmers is stronger in the countries of Eastern Europe** where national agriculture is perceived as being in a state of hardship or undergoing total reorganisation.

"In Spain for example, one farmer raises 800 pigs, whereas over here he has only one or two, 10 at the most. In such conditions it is impossible to have sustainable agriculture; it will always be influenced by imports and the market conjuncture. A certain level of mechanisation and productivity will have to be reached for the producers to be able to guarantee sustainability" (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social group).

"The farmers are alone. They do not ally." "Even the government does not know what to do, how to help farmers." "No one informs the farmers about their opportunities." (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

"Farmers should play a positive role but they do not. They can't do anything if they are not supported by society as a whole" (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ Attitudes with respect to farmers generally tend to be **positive**, although on occasionally certain practices are condemned (farmers who do not consume their own production and keep their “organic chickens” for themselves), their dependence on subsidies and their conservatism. **The general opinion is, however, that if they are well supported and educated they could potentially be important agents in a favourable change towards sustainable agriculture** – even though most of them remain passive so far (nowhere are they given a blank cheque).

VI.2 THE FOOD INDUSTRY

- ▶ Along with distribution, the food industry represents **one of the most widely criticised actors within the system.**
- ▶ By contrast to farmers, **it is therefore an actor that is at once highly active and yet with a negative influence on sustainable agriculture.**
- ▶ With the exception of a few distant minority opinions – “we don’t know enough to be able to judge” and positive opinions – relative trust in their “competence” and “expertise” – the overwhelming majority of reactions are dominated by **defiance and reprobation:**
 - an industry **exclusively concerned with the quest for profit and the short term;**
 - **all-powerful multinationals that dictate their conditions to producers**, impoverishing them or condemning them to unemployment;
 - use of additives and preservatives which are suspected to have **harmful effects on health;**
 - **polluters**, producers of non-recyclable waste (plastic, overpackaging, etc.);
 - at the extreme end of the scale, **cynical and dishonest exploiters** of Third World countries.

The greatest reluctance concerning the food industry can be observed in Greece, Germany, Poland and Hungary, followed by the Czech Republic, Estonia and Romania.

Conversely, the most moderate views can be seen in France, Italy, Spain and Sweden.

“What the industry is interested in is short term profit. What matters is to secure their revenue for the next 30-40 years” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“They buy such amounts that they dictate their prices. The small farmer works hard, but does not manage to have low prices. The industry buys from the big ones, in Germany or even abroad” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

“They have the power. Why would they do so? What’s in it for them?” (Belgium. Higher-middle social group)

“Is there really any need for all the plastic they put around those ready meals; wouldn't it be just as easy to package them in paper that you could put into your green bin” (Ireland. Lower-middle social group)

“They have influence on what sort of food we receive, because they process this food. They add all the ingredients. Not always healthy. And these are them who can accelerate some change.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

“It [food processing industry] has responsibilities to its shareholders and that's it, end of story. That's their only responsibility. They have no obligation because they have no morality.” (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

“They are thieves.” “They don't pay workers properly.” “All of them are owned by foreigners. It is not good for us.” (Hungary. Lower middle social group)

“Semper used to sell milk to the Third World, which affected those people negatively. The industry then changed their production, distribution and marketing strategy mainly thanks to media focusing on the issue.”(Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

“There used to be less competition, currently competition causes working cheaper and using less employees” (Estonia. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ In the most optimistic cases, which are rare, there is an anticipation that they could place their formidable power at the service of improved agricultural production, that in the long term they could develop a share of sustainable agriculture, imposing production rules on farmers and by cutting down on intermediaries especially. However, even in this case, a certain fatalism is observed or allusion is made to the risk of marketing “takeover” (“exploiting the organic niche”).

“They could make quality available for everyone, but there will always be high quality and low quality food, it is an economic factor for the one who buys” (France. Higher-middle social group)

VI.3 DISTRIBUTORS

- ▶ As is the case for the agro-food industry, **distributors attract widespread criticism**, some of it extremely vicious.
- ▶ Also blessed with **vast power**, they are seen to be all the more reprehensible as they abuse this power:
 - policy exclusively centred on profit, achievement of **excessive profit margins**, imposing both low prices on producers and high prices on consumers;
 - **shameless exploitation of “trends”**, including the “organic trend”;
 - **deception** surrounding the goods.

“They only think of their own profits and sales.” (Belgium. Lower-middle social group)

“The distributors have realized that they can make money with bio products – so you have bio supermarkets or bio departments in traditional supermarkets. Earlier those were products sold in a dark corner, now they give them a nice space” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“They do nothing. Part of the meat they sell is even rotten.” (Belgium. Lower-middle social group)

“They “refresh” products. They deceive clients. On weight, expiry date.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

In some countries, the attitudes observed are less negative – occasionally some distributors are even credited for taking positive initiatives. It can be seen in Belgium (at least in the higher-middle group), Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ireland (more reservedly) and the Czech Republic.

- ▶ Nevertheless, given their de facto position – privileged intermediaries for consumer demand – they are **credited as having a potentially positive role in the promotion of sustainable development**:

- awareness-raising campaigns on respect for the environment (examples of store chains active in this process, with, e.g., elimination of plastic bags);
- taking consumer demand into account, sections dedicated to organic products, fair trade, etc.;
- efforts as regards information on products, origin, composition, “quality marks”, etc.;
- creation of store “concepts” that are active in the sustainable development process.

“I think that concept stores could contribute to the sustainable development and also serve as something that attracts the consumers.” (Sweden. Higher-middle social group)

VI.4 PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

- ▶ In a somewhat typical, stereotypical and caricatural manner, the public authorities – understood as including governments, politicians and also supra-national bodies such as the European Union and the World Bank – **at once form the object of the most vivid criticism and the most demanding expectations**.
- ▶ **In theory**, they have **a considerable amount of power**:
 - ability to **regulate and legislate**;
 - availability of **funds and “subsidies”**;

- means of **carrying out monitoring**;
- ability to **impose sanctions**.

In a large number of countries, however, they are discredited and considered to be unreliable:

- **absence of political “will”** and long-term strategy;
- **poor distribution** of financial aid and support, especially for “European subsidies”;
- **poor operation, incompetence**;
- sometimes even **corruption and embezzlement**, in some countries of former Communist Europe in particular.

Here we can see the reflection of the existing scepticism vis-a-vis governments and public authorities, which we observe in numerous studies in European countries – regarding practically any policy field. In this study’s sample, the Swedish respondents are the only ones who tend to regard their role in a positive light. Some of the Belgians (in the higher-middle social group), of the Irish, the Czechs and the Estonians also appear to be less critical than the average.

“It’s government that is responsible, not us.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

“To be honest, I don’t really understand GM food production, and to be honest I don’t think anyone else here does either, but it is the government’s job to understand it, and to put a stop to it if it is going to damage Ireland’s land” (Ireland. Higher-middle social group)

“G8, and the authorities generally speaking have little credibility, for half of their time they work for their own interests first by striving to increase their arms sales, and then they think of food for those who are starving” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

“No voice of public authorities. They are blackmailed by businessmen.” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“The State should make things simple so that consumers find it easy to buy and the farmers easy to produce. Farmers should have a system through which to sell. The State does not have to pay in addition but they should make sustainable food more easily available” (Estonia. Higher-middle social group).

“They are major projects for financing (the development of) agriculture, with relevant, non political criteria. As I saw it in the press Europe has many times stressed it, and so has the World Bank, that there are very major funds available, important sums of money to develop Romanian agriculture on a different basis. But that money went somewhere, in a black hole” (Romania. Lower-middle social group)

“They (Europe) give the wrong subsidies”. “They cause milk lakes and butter mountains.” “Their approach is unethical.” “There is no such thing as “sustainable policy-making”.” (Belgium. Higher-middle social group)

VI.5 CITIZENS AND CONSUMERS THEMSELVES

- ▶ Respondents for all countries have an **extremely ambivalent attitude**, divided as they are between a **sense of powerlessness** and a certain **sense of guilt**, linked to an **awareness of their potential power**, and especially their collective power.

"We should blame ourselves for buying trash." (Poland. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ The sense of **powerlessness** is often extensively developed, the "right" reasons, pretexts and excuses being present in droves. In particular, their own lack of effective power is explained:

- faced with the **market** and the system of production and distribution;
- as regards the **economic means** of each individual, the less well-off are thus deprived of the products of "sustainable agriculture", which are considered to be more expensive;
- through the supposed **egocentrism of each individual**, absence of collective action (of the type involving "consumer associations" or "boycotts", for example).

"The citizens feel powerless in face of this problem: we are shrinking on ourselves" (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

"How can you put pressure on the supermarkets? If you say I am going to boycott the cheap stuff and buy the expensive stuff, well, they are laughing! So how can you do it? You can't." (United Kingdom. Lower-middle social group)

"It is completely paradoxical. On the one hand, the consumer wants to have a diversity of supply available, he wants healthy, nourishing products – only he does not want to pay the true price for these products – so the producers weigh on prices and produce rubbish" (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

"The consumer would have the power if he wanted, because he is the one who has the money, but there is no solidarity whatsoever between consumers!" (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

"What does this means? That the consumer who cannot afford good apples has no right to eat apples" (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

"You can decide to buy from Solidarity Purchase Groups (GAS) but it's quite a small thing compared to the size of the problem" (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

"I'm going to do the same. Nobody is going to work for my benefit in any way" (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

"As long as price plays a major role, we are geared in a direction that might not be the best for sustainable development." (Sweden. Lower-middle social group)

"We should be buying Hungarian products. But we cannot. They are too expensive." (Hungary. Higher-middle social group)

"I cannot just simply decide to buy biological products. I know that it is the right thing to do but I cannot afford it" (Greece. Lower-middle social group)

"Boycotting certain products requires the availability of alternative choice, which is non-existent right now" (Greece. Higher-middle social group)

"What we buy depends on what they produce. When we have a problem with some products, the whole procedure to do anything about it is so long and strenuous that everyone would say "no, thanks" at the halfway stage of it or just in the very beginning. For 3 zlotys? So much of my time and nerves..." (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ Only a select few have already changed their habits, notably following health scandals or due to personal convictions – purchases of organic products, "fair trade" products, direct purchases from the producer, etc. – or consider behaving as more active consumers in the future, in Spain, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria – notably in the higher-middle groups.
- ▶ Lastly, beyond this hesitancy or admission that they have renounced changing their habits, although the majority of respondents state that they are open to the question, **widespread scepticism remains the rule as regards attaining sustainable development in the short term.**

VI.6 OTHER ACTORS

- ▶ Reference is often made to all "**communicators**", **journalists and the media**, which are often considered as being able to play a decisive role in awareness-raising and information, especially as a "counterforce" to the "advertising pressure" of large groups.

"Large companies can afford large scale costly aggressive advertising campaigns which shape your taste without yourself even realizing it. The higher quality products which are grown by less big producers cannot reach the consumer because they cannot afford such advertising campaigns. Perhaps some special funds would be needed to limit the influence of aggressive campaigns for potatoe crisps, snacks, wafers, etc ..." (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social group).

- ▶ To a lesser extent, reference is also made to the following:
 - **teaching and education** as a factor in socio-cultural change;
 - **the medical profession** (information campaigns and prevention campaigns, etc.);
 - **NGOs**;
 - "chef" type **celebrities** and popular scientists;
 - **the UN**.

Chapter VII

Influence on behaviours of questions of sustainable food and agriculture

VII.1 CURRENT INFLUENCE OF THESE QUESTIONS

- ▶ In the overwhelming majority of cases, respondents state that they carry out their purchases independently of explicit considerations as regards development and sustainable food and agriculture.
- ▶ Only some of the Swedish respondents believe that consumers are strongly influenced by the current debates on ecology and sustainable agriculture, as their awareness has been raised through the media. In addition, they find they have a clear indicator for their purchases – the swan label.
- ▶ Only a few consumers consider themselves to be “pioneers” in their practices, inasmuch as they associate organic products with “sustainable” agriculture. In addition, the majority acknowledge that this involves a preoccupation with their “own” health or that of their family rather than a global and collective concern for the long term.

“If I did, it is more out of a concern for my own health, for example not buying strawberries in February or March because they are full of insecticides, not because it is better for future generations” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ In the same way, “direct” purchases from the producer – whether the opportunity has arisen due to residing in the countryside or for those from countries that are still “physically” close to their farmers – who may be “relations” (Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, etc.) – take place in the same perspective of personal pleasure (taste, flavour, absence of chemical products, etc.).
- ▶ On the other hand, the purchase of “fair trade” products is, for its part, perceived as linked to a deliberate practice close to the concept of sustainable development.
- ▶ As a general rule, the concepts submitted for debate meet with approval, and are all the better received due to the fact that they provide, in part, a response to widely-shared current preoccupations: preoccupation with ecology, preoccupation with health and dietetics, return to a form of the “good old” traditions that had been lost (seasons, cuisine, specialities), desire for a better balance between rich and poorly-off countries.

That said, each individual is only prepared to change on condition that the “price” – economic of course, but also in terms of availability, clarity, ease of “physical” access (stores, supply, labelling, etc.) – is reasonable and accessible “to all”.

“I’ll still buy some things, like coffee, in fair trade shops, but everything is much more expensive than in regular stores” (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

VII.2 PROPENSITY TO A GREATER AWARENESS IN THE FUTURE

- ▶ Almost all are agreed that their awareness has been raised by the debate, without however envisaging radical changes in their habits.
- ▶ A large number admit that they are likely to remain in the realm of “declared good intentions”.

“I am not going to make revolutionary changes” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

- All mention the following:
- the obstacle of price above all;
- strong expectations as regards convincing information, arguments, proof and guaranteed checks, etc;
- force of habit;
- the attraction of “convenience”.

“You begin to be suspicious of everything because your are told it’s fine and 10 years later it’s bad, what is at stake is to diversify (your food)” (France. Lower-middle social group)

“I might make a small effort to buy my wholemeal bread from the baker from time to time, or maybe soap from the local hardware store, eventhough it is 10 cents more expensive, in order to support small retailers, but next to that ...” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

“From us guys here you can tell it’s not something that we have particularly thought about or know a hell of a lot about. We know more about it now and perhaps will pay more interest in it like we do since the healthy foods adverts, eating 5 fruit and veg a day. Everything is starting to be drummed into us so you just learn as things become a bigger issue.” (United Kingdom. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ A few, rarer still, state that they are not concerned or reject the question, whilst others are of the opinion that there are more essential priorities for themselves and their country.

“I wouldn’t change anything because I do not have the shadow of a bad conscience. There are more serious problems in the world these days than whether I buy my apples from a bio producer” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“People of Hungary care about surviving, not about this issue!” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“Why finance the other countries: let us first solve our own problems” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

Chapter VIII

***Reactions to various texts
serving to illustrate
sustainable food and
agriculture***

VIII.1 TEXT A

“Sustainable food means a diversity of food products that keep the characteristics and taste from each area of land.

It is the opposite of industrial scale farming which tends to develop standardized produce with no character.

We must react against this trend, otherwise future generations will lose the sense of taste and the pleasure to enjoy the foodstuffs and dishes which we have inherited from the traditions of each country and each region.”

.....

- ▶ This text is **appreciated to varying degrees**.
- ▶ It evokes **positive notions**, centred on **pleasure, taste, flavour and rural products**. In so doing, it addresses itself to the affective domain and to sensuality, and associates sustainable food with a valued and gratifying promise. The pleasant evocations – traditional and regional specialities, etc. – are many and are motivating factors, especially when it is a question of preserving these sources of pleasure for future generations.

These notions are present and well understood in practically all countries and all groups.

In a few of them only, the link between diversity and sustainable food is not, or not always, perceived (in Belgium; in Sweden; in Poland where certain respondents even view it as contradictory, because they see sustainable food products as being a limited “range”, which has to respond to precisely defined specifications).

- ▶ **However, at the same time it also gives rise to criticisms:**
 - **deemed exaggerated** by those who tend to interpret it as a radical invitation to do away with industrialized agri-food.

Among them one finds notably respondents from Germany, Sweden, Ireland, Hungary, the Czech Republic (in the higher-middle social group), Estonia (in the lower-middle group) and Bulgaria (one in two respondents): either because they see in it an exaggerated attack against an industry which, after all, is able to offer varied ranges of food products, or because certain (basic) foodstuffs will always be produced in that way anyway.
 - **deemed utopian** (although it would be a desirable ideal) by some of the same respondents as well as by the Spaniards and part of the Romanians.
 - **criticized for its imperious and somewhat moralising tone** – all the more so as the injunction is not accompanied by suggestions of means of action (cf. the above-mentioned gap between attitudes that are largely in favour of sustainable food and inertia in behaviour change).

This is perceived as being particularly offensive by British, French (mainly in the lower-middle group), and Czech (in the other group) respondents. In several countries, the interviewees suggest less strongly that another wording should be used – avoid accusing so strongly, be more motivating.

Some remarks are also made, **pointing out that this text does not deal with all dimensions of sustainable food**, such as they appeared in the earlier stages of discussion. They are expressed in Belgium, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In certain groups, there is hardly any criticism expressed (or only marginally) – in Italy, Greece, in the lower-middle group in the Czech Republic; about half of the Bulgarians (from both groups) also voice no objections.

*“Still it creates a positive emotion because you are heading for a natural product”
(France. Lower-middle social group)*

“It is laying the blame on us, whereas they are the ones who keep it going the way it is” (France. Lower-middle social group)

“No, unindustrialised agriculture is little effective. It condemns farmers to poverty and misery (...). That’s why Bulgaria must reach a certain level of modernisation and it is impossible to apply the same criteria as in Western Europe, which is at another stage of development” (Bulgaria. Lower-middle social group)

VIII.2 TEXT B

“Sustainable food is foodstuffs which we can trust because they are wholesome and have been produced with care for nature and the environment: with minimum usage of fertilizers and chemicals, and by observing natural conditions in animal breeding and welfare.”

- ▶ This text is received in a generally **favourable, but rather neutral manner**. Frequently compared to the previous text, A, it is appreciated for being more informative than sentimental, more measured, less aggressive and less “propagandist”.
- ▶ In addition, it is considered to be **more pertinent for the subject and in step with the spontaneous perceptions of “sustainable food”** – preoccupation with health, less chemical products, environmental and ethical dimension.

A few, however, decry the lack of a “social” aspect. Others find that the concept is overly restricted to the “biological” aspect (or even simply to “natural” food).

- ▶ In addition, the call for **“trust” gives rise to varied reactions**:
 - positive because this text has a reassuring aspect and evokes safety, contrary to the “aggressiveness” of the previous one (notably in Belgium, Greece, the United Kingdom, Sweden in part, Romania ...).
 - doubtful or uncertain as regards guarantees and controls: in Sweden and in the lower-middle groups in Poland and Estonia.
- ▶ **The idea of a utopia, or an ideal hardly reachable remains in some groups, although much less strongly**: in France, Spain, Hungary (food corresponding entirely to this definition cannot be imagined, be it only for price reasons).

Calls for a “middle of the road” policy, between organic and industrial farming, can be heard in Greece and Ireland.

- ▶ **Lastly, it should be noted that one phrase in the text often raises questions and sometimes doubts:** that of “minimum” usage of fertilisers and chemicals.

The intention in the text appears **ambiguous** – “minimum” can mean that one strives to use them as little as possible, or that a certain amount will be kept anyhow.

Some people even regret seeing any reference to fertilisers and chemicals, which they perceive as opposed to the ideal of totally natural modes of production.

This ambiguity can be observed among some Frenchmen, Belgians, Italians, Greeks, Swedes, Estonians and Romanians.

- ▶ **Although this text is overall well received, it may appear too “neutral”** insofar as it offers a definition and explanations, yet without concluding on what should be done.

“The theory is very good, but the practise is not so” (Spain. Higher-middle social group)

“It is a dream. No one will observe regulations” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“You have to know what you want. If we all want to eat meat everyday, there is just no room to breed all that cattle in the old way and if everyone wants to eat yoghurt tasting of cherries, you have to use synthetic aromas. You must learn to live with a certain amount of hypocrisy. I cannot feel bad whenever I throw something in the dustbin just because some children are starving” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“To produce without chemicals, it’s too late” (Germany. Lower-middle social group)

VIII.3 TEXT C

“The food industry makes available products which are often of decent quality, convenient to store and use, and at reasonable prices.

But we know less and less how those products are made, which ingredients and additives are used, and what health consequences they may have in the shorter or longer term.”

- ▶ **Reactions to this text are varied:**

- **positive** overall among the French respondents of the upper-middle social level, the Greeks, the Britons, the Czechs, the Estonians, the Romanians and the Bulgarians.

It evokes **concerns which they have themselves** as to the possible harmful effect of little known components of food products.

Few criticisms can be heard in these groups. Some relate to the absence of explicit reference to sustainable food, to the fact that the text does not cover all of its dimensions, to denunciations of the decreasing informative content which appear exaggerated (information has rather improved), or to questions of form.

- **moderately positive or neutral** in Italy, Spain, Germany, Ireland, Poland and Estonia.

The general idea of the text is understood and accepted, in spite of some questions and some requests for wording changes: it is true that one can find (clear) information missing, but there is more information than in earlier days.

- **with more reservations in the other countries or groups.**

For some people, they relate to an explicit or implicit **refusal to blame to such a point the agro-food industry** or the information it makes available for consumers (an improvement from the past) (in Belgium and Sweden).

The words “decent” and “often” are sometimes rejected: the former because it is ambiguous, the latter when it implies that the products sold on the market do not necessarily comply with this quality level.

From there, **the text can generate worries and anxiety**, or be perceived as **scornful** (for people who feel pointed at and victimised for not being able to afford sustainable products).

Such reservations can be heard the most in the French lower-middle group, in Belgium, Sweden and Hungary.

In this connection, **a large number of respondents declare that they are still sensitive to “prices”**, as well as to the advantages described in the first paragraph (consumer convenience, availability).

- ▶ **Neither does the text end up with a stimulating message.**

“We agree with the second sentence, but not with the first one. Reasonable prices don’t exist” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

VIII.4 TEXT D

“Certain companies in the food industry and certain retail chains are making real efforts to develop a range of food products that stick to the rules of sustainable development: by buying from local producers who are committed to observing clearly specified crop growing and animal breeding practices that are environmentally friendly; by fair trade agreements with producers in Third World countries; by clear and transparent methods of industrial food processing.

We should buy more from those brands and those retailers.”

- ▶ This text is **one of the most controversial:**

- it tends to be **well received in Western European countries** (except a rather neutral reception, or the feeling of a theoretic proposition in the lower-middle groups in France and Belgium and expressions of surprise in Greece);

- it is, on the contrary, **highly contested in Central and Eastern European countries** – with the exception of the Czech Republic and Bulgaria where it is not rejected in principle.

► In Western European countries, the main **positive aspects** of the text are as follows:

- the **contractual** dimension, the reference to **“fair trade”** and to Third World countries;
- **clear definition** of sustainable development;
- for a few respondents, associations with **well known** brands, stores and labels (for example SuperQuinn in Ireland, the Swan label in Sweden, etc.).

► At the same time, a few **criticisms** remain:

- **the final call for action** is considered as overly authoritarian and/or excluding those unable to access the said brands and stores (for economic reasons in particular);
- **problem of credibility** as regards the true efforts of the chains and companies referred to and the quality of their “responsible” commitment to sustainable development (among others, fairness of “contracts” with Third World countries);
- **non-accessibility to all for said products.**

“This seems to be forgetting that many people cannot afford it” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

► The text is **largely criticised in other countries:**

- **strong refuting of the call to purchase;**
- **marked distrust** of companies and chains that show a so-called respect for the principle of sustainable development;
- **ambivalent attitudes towards the Third World**, either because there is a belief that production methods are not very reliable there and are not subject to monitoring, or because respondents do not feel “concerned”, or because they implicitly consider themselves as belonging to a developing country;

“I think we are at the level of the Third World as regard resources, but in terms of quality level, we are not Third World” (Romania. Lower-middle social group)

“Yes, the civilized Europe is a major producer of food products ... But they use our raw materials and they process them ... Do they look at us as Third World producers?” “I think this is the way we are looked upon by Westerners, as being the Third World as far as agriculture is concerned” (Romania. Lower-middle social group)

“Can any of you guys name these chains for me?” (Hungary. Higher-middle social group)

“You remember the fines these supermarkets had to pay for selling food of bad quality? ha-ha!” (Bulgaria. Lower-middle social group)

“Unpleasant images are evoked ... In Third World countries, there are chaotic market conditions and exploitation” (Greece. Lower-middle social group)

“(Laughter) “Honest” and Third World countries, this word “fair”... If they were honest, there would not be the Third World...” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

“I don’t believe in that! It would be good if food producers did so. The first sentence is idealised” (Poland. Higher-middle social group)

- **overly “advertising” tone**, too much centered on companies and distributors.

VIII.5 TEXT E

“Two scenarios for the future:

Scenario one: agriculture based on very large farms, concentrated in the most profitable pieces of land, all growing the same crops along several dozens of kilometres, and a “rural desert” in other areas where land is left neglected.

Scenario two: a system making it possible to keep medium sized farms everywhere, with a variety of crops and preserving the diversity of shapes and colours of our landscape.

Which of these scenarios do we want?”

- ▶ This text is considered as **the most extreme, and even as the most “caricatural” and “simplistic”**.
- ▶ **The scenarios put forward are judged to be too violently opposed**, and perform a kind of “emotional coup de force” leading to “forced” adhesion to the second system.
- ▶ **The second scenario is seen as too idyllic and “far-fetched”**. In addition, it relates less to sustainable agriculture than to a “romantic” vision of rurality, lacking in concrete proposals.

“How is this possible?” (Greece. Lower-middle social group)

- ▶ **In some Central and Eastern European countries** (in particular the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary and Estonia), **the opposition between the two scenarios is not considered as pertinent**: the reorganisation of agriculture – and sometimes the replotting of land – is “the” priority problem. Moreover, “small-scale” farms are generally perceived as less profitable: the second scenario is **not believable in this respect**, even though it would be ideally preferable.

“Agriculture to be reorganised. That is the point!” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“The first scenario is not yet the problem in Estonia. Estonia already has its wastelands” (Estonia. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ It can be observed, otherwise, that **the link between sustainable agriculture and diverse landscapes is not strongly present in the citizens’ minds** (except among some of the Poles and Estonians).

VIII.6 TEXT F

“Less intensive farming, less mechanized, using less fertilizers and chemicals, is a system that takes social concerns into account.

Firstly, by preserving jobs in the agricultural sector and thus avoiding adding to unemployment.

Secondly, by keeping alive our rural areas and countryside. A village where there are no longer any farmers is often a village in which local craftsmen and shops gradually close down, followed by the post office and the local pub; either it just dies or it becomes a soulless dormitory village without any local life.”

► This text is **widely criticised both in its essence and in its form.**

▷ **In its essence:**

- **challenging of the “negative” presentation of “automation”;** it seems “absurd” to call it into question, specially in Central and Eastern European countries, where in fact it is said that agriculture is dying from a “lack” of machinery, and that it needs subsidies in order to be modernised;

“It is necessary to support our agriculture. Disadvantageous conditions were negotiated for our farmers when we accessed the UE...” (Czech Republic. Lower-middle social group)

- **impression that “globalisation” is irreversible;**

“We are living in the age of globalisation ... The small guy or the one who is too small does not manage to survive” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

- **agricultural jobs** seen as uninspiring and in any case occupied by migrants, and consequently without any effects on unemployment;

“The harvesting is done by Polish workers. Farmers can neither afford machinery nor German workers. They go and fetch a truckload of Polish people – treating them nearly like prisoners – and they get them to work for 2.50 euros per hour, and these Polish people can make their families live for the whole year”

“In reality, the young people do not want to continue with their parents’ farm because it is not profitable, it’s too much work, and unbearable working hours” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

- **“sleeping” or “dead” villages, which are already a reality;**

“The villages are getting empty for lack of farming machinery. These days you only see old women bent in the fields. Young people do not want to do an exhausting work without machinery” (Bulgaria. Higher-middle social group)

“That happened to my town near Bristol. Everything closed down.” (United Kingdom. Higher-middle social group)

- the idea of revitalising the countryside through sustainable agriculture is **not believable**.

Only some of the Greek, Polish and Czech respondents appear to be less negative.

▷ **In its form:**

- **text is overly verbose and uninspiring;**
- **“bucolic”, “Disney-style”, nostalgic vision of rurality.**

*“What a narrow-minded concept. It is from a Disney movie, but a French version”
(Sweden. Higher-middle social group)*

- **“melodramatic” or “electioneering” tone**, as regards the “slogan”;
- **situation depicted depressing, not motivating.**

VIII.7 TEXT G

“Mankind is dangerously playing the apprentice sorcerer in developing food production methods that turn their back on the laws of nature. In just a few decades, if we go on following this path, the earth’s natural resources will be irreversibly damaged.

Sustainable food requires responsibly produced and responsibly distributed foodstuffs.

But it also requires responsible consumers who accept having to pay a slightly higher price to help preserve the planet’s future.”

- ▶ This text **“calls for action” in quite a violent way**: raw and coarse language that is “striking”, direct challenging of consumers.
- ▶ It is considered by some **“the best” of all the texts put forward** – in the United Kingdom and Romania in particular. It also arouses positive reactions in Italy and Sweden, less so in Poland and Germany, and among part of the upper-middle group participants in Belgium, Spain and Estonia.
 - It states the facts without sentimentality.

“You have saved the best to last because that’s giving us facts – if we don’t change the way that we do things at the moment, then we will cause irreversible damage and we have to pay the price for the food” (United Kingdom. Lower-middle social group).

- It is clear in its reasoning (logical consequences logiques, term referred to, etc.).
- It corresponds with what is known.
- It places the blame unequivocally with the consumer.

- ▶ For some, on the other hand, it is **overly dramatic** or “pathetic”, and may consequently be considered to have reduced impact, resulting either in adopting a certain sense of distance – respondents do not feel they are concerned with “saving the planet” – or shifting of the blame to others – it should be seen as the fault of “all” actors and “all” countries (among which in particular the United States, China, etc.).

“Ridiculous wording...” (Hungary. Lower-middle social group)

“I pay more in order to preserve my health not to preserve the planet” (Estonia. Higher-middle social group)

- ▶ A large number find it **too negative and consequently discouraging**.
- ▶ **The notion of “assigning blame” is positive and well received, but leads to a call for monitoring, solid proof of the true existence of the commitments of producers, distributors, etc.**
- ▶ **Evocation of additional costs rekindles the ambivalent attitudes outlined above:** this is a considerable stumbling block for some, questionable creation of “two-speed food”. In a number of countries, those in the less well off categories of the population clearly deny the assumption that they should, or could, pay more.
- ▶ **Text very much centered on the “environment” and anti-GMOs** (apparently linked to the term “apprentice sorcerer”), and does not directly evoke the dimensions linked to health (one of the dimensions with the most motivation), social and ethical.

Chapter IX

Final impressions

- ▶ In all countries we observe an almost unanimous consideration for **positive discussion**, constructive, “most interesting”, stimulating, and thought-provoking. All or almost all praise the procedure and its initiator.
- ▶ The vast majority recognises that the debate has served to:
 - raise awareness and reinforce the preoccupation for the future with respect to quality of products and the production system;
 - assign blame;
 - provide information.
- ▶ However, the majority also point out or reiterate that:
 - the discussion remained “theoretical” and that concrete proposals are lacking;
 - “average” citizens have little power;
 - the driving force must come from governments;
 - information and education will be determining factors;
 - the term “sustainable” is not necessarily the most pertinent, inspiring and convincing;
 - the procedure will be long and complex, and that they remain sceptical as to its implementation.

“I assume this study was designed to help in some way. So it’s a positive thing. I appreciate this initiative”. “I did not get bored at all, I don’t have the impression that I have wasted my time. It would be nice to discuss this issue on a wider scale” (Romania. Higher-middle social group)

“It’s been a very intense debate. Monica explained a lot of things which we did not know about, and she made us feel that we would like to know more” (Italy. Higher-middle social group)

“No doubt, an interesting discussion, we have discovered something which can contribute to our personal development, rather difficult to discuss, but pleasant to go deeper into, and helping us to become aware of our responsibilities to the coming generations” (Italy. Lower-middle social group)

“It remained a little abstract; we should look further to know what exactly we should do at our own level” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“From now on, perhaps I will not only think of my own health when I go to the grocery shop. But of all the points we have been discussing today” (Germany. Higher-middle social group)

“So we’ve just discussed some theories, but life is life and it goes on. We would like it to be so, but I don’t believe in it.” (Poland. Lower-middle social group)

Annex I

Partner institutes

Belgium	EADC – Yellow Window (Antwerp)
Bulgaria	Alpha Resarch Lt (Sofia)
Czech Republic	MARECO (Prague)
Germany	Echanges Marktforschung (Cologne)
Estonia	TNS EMOR (Tallinn)
Greece	FOCUS (Athens)
Spain	Escario Research (Madrid)
France	CSA (Paris)
Ireland	TNS – MRBI (Dublin)
Italy	Market Dynamics International (Milan)
Hungary	Ad Hoc Plus Research (Budapest)
Poland	BSM (Warsaw)
Romania	Data Media (Bucharest)
Sweden	Kommunicera (Stockholm)
United Kingdom	Andrew Irving Associates (London)

Annex II

Discussion guide

INTRODUCTION

Hello, I am, from, the research agency in charge of the consumer study which brings us here together today. May I first ask each of you to introduce him/herself with a few words: please tell us who you are, where you live, if you live alone or together with someone else, if you have children and how old they are, and what you do for a living (or what your spouse/partner does if you do not work yourself).

THEME I

I.1 Our discussion will be about food products.

First of all, I would like to know what leads you to choose the food products that you consume, what are the criteria by which you choose them, and the kinds of information you look for when buying those products, etc.

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Nature of choice criteria

Criteria other than price

Respective importance of the different criteria, and why

Any differences depending on product types

I.2 On the whole, would you say that you have enough information available to make the right decisions about which food products to buy, or on the contrary is any information missing or difficult to find – which information?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Overall degree of satisfaction/dissatisfaction

Nature of dissatisfaction

Differences depending on the nature of the products

THEME II

- II.1** Let us go a little further into this discussion on what we consume, or more widely our food habits.

Food habits are related to a series of quite different factors. Personal tastes of course, possibly certain rules that we may follow or impose on ourselves, the type of life we lead, as well as family habits, or local traditions from the regions where we come from, etc, etc.

I would like to have your different views on this subject, thinking of these factors, or any other factors that may come to mind. In other words, could each of you try to tell us about his or her own “food history”?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Ask each participant to tell his/her own “food history”

- II.2** There are food habits that we tend to keep unchanged, but our food habits may also change in other respects. Thinking back, say, over the last 10 years, what has changed as far as you are personally concerned – whether regarding what your meals consist in, which types of food products you buy, how you cook them, how much time you devote to it, etc?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Make each participant elicit his/her changes of food habits, and which factors led to these changes

- II.3** Following what you have just been saying, do you think that you are likely to change anything in your food habits – still thinking about your meals, the food products you eat, how you prepare them, the time you spend on it, etc?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Ask each participant to elicit his/her future changes in behaviour in relation with food (if any), and the factors likely to lead to these changes

THEME III

- III.1** Following this discussion on food, let us turn to a more general topic, i.e. sustainable development. Is it an idea with which you are familiar, and what does it mean to you?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

- Degree of familiarity and understanding
- Different dimensions of this concept evoked by the respondents
- Mentioned fields of application of sustainable development

- III.2** When you hear about aiming for more sustainable development in the future, what does it involve in your own view, and how do you feel about it?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

- Perceived importance of the problem
- Action to be taken leading to sustainable development: by which actors, and which are the responsibilities of each one?
- Propensity to involve oneself or not; how; by doing what?

THEME IV

- IV.1** I would now like to move more specifically to the topic of sustainable development in the food area or, using another phrase, sustainable food.

In your own view, what does sustainable food mean, or what could it involve?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

- Degree of familiarity and understanding
- Different dimensions of this concept
- Mentioned fields of application of sustainable food

- IV.2** Several aspects can be included in the general idea of sustainable food – I am going to mention them. I would like you to tell me what you think about each one and what it means to you.

For each aspect:

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

- Understanding and interpretations of the concept
- Ideas evoked
- Interest and credibility

- A.** The environmental aspect – how the food we consume and the food products that we choose to buy can contribute to better protection of the environment.

- B.** The social aspect – how aiming for food that is compatible with sustainable development can have an impact in the social field?

- C.** Health related issues – how sustainable food and health are related questions?

- D.** The ethical aspect – how can ethical factors be related to the idea of sustainable food?

E. Such values as diversity and authenticity – how is sustainable food related to these values?

F. The economic aspect – how can sustainable food contribute to economic development with lasting medium and long term effects?

IV.3 There are perhaps other dimensions of this question and other ideas you may have in mind when thinking of sustainable food (besides the environmental, social, health related, ethical, related to the values of diversity and authenticity, and economic aspects).

Which are they?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

The different other dimensions mentioned

To what extent can they be related to one or another of the 6 aspects discussed under § IV.2

THEME V

V.1 Another way of looking into this question would be to talk about sustainable agriculture.

What does it mean to you, what comes to mind about it?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Degree of familiarity and understanding

Different dimensions of this concept; are they the same (or not) as those mentioned in relation with sustainable food?

Mentioned fields of application of sustainable agriculture

V.2 Let us consider again the same aspects of the question which we have discussed in relation with sustainable food.

For each one, please tell me what you think of it, and what it means to you when thinking of sustainable agriculture.

For each aspect:

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Understanding and interpretations of the concept

Ideas evoked

Interest and credibility

A. The environmental aspect of sustainable agriculture

B. The social aspects of sustainable agriculture

C. The health-related aspects of sustainable agriculture

D. The ethical aspects of sustainable agriculture

E. The contribution of sustainable agriculture to preserving diversity and authenticity

F. The economic aspects of sustainable agriculture

G. Any other aspect of sustainable agriculture

THEME VI

Earlier in our discussion, you mentioned different actors who may have a role, either positive or negative, as regards sustainable development in general.

As regards food and agriculture in particular, let us now talk about several types of actors: for each one, the role it is currently playing in the system in your own view, and what it could or should do to contribute to sustainable development in the area of food and agriculture.

Probe, for each type of actor:

What it is, or not, currently doing (either on the positive or the negative side)

What responsibilities does it have in the current situation

What it could or should do

Degree of trust in this type of actor and credibility of its current or potential actions

A. Farmers

B. The food processing industry

C. Retail distributors, such as supermarket chains

D. The public authorities, through the different public policies

E. Ourselves, as citizens and consumers

F. Any other actors. Which ones?

THEME VII

VII.1 In consuming and buying food products, does it ever happen that these factors related to sustainable food and sustainable agriculture do play a role and have any influence on what you currently do?

Thinking back about your own behaviour, could you recall any examples?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Examples of each respondent's behaviour which may have been closely or indirectly related with sustainable food/agriculture concerns

VII.2 Now, thinking of your future behaviours in relation to food, would you say that you are or not likely to become more sensitive to sustainable food and/or agriculture issues? How much, and in what ways?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Degree of personal sensitivity and involvement with this problem

Examples of future behaviours taking this problem into account

THEME VIII

To conclude our discussion, may I show you some ideas that have been expressed on food sustainability and how this notion could be made clearer: I will ask you to read a few short texts dealing with various aspects of the question. For each one, please tell me how you feel about it.

For each text:

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Understanding

Interest

Credibility

Images evoked and emotions aroused

Degree of approval of the ideas expressed and images evoked

Suggestions for improvement/rephrasing

A. Text A

B. Text B

C. Text C

D. Text D

E. Text E

F. Text F

G. Text G

THEME IX

Finally, before we leave, could you please give me your overall impressions about this discussion?

Spontaneous reactions

Probe:

Degree of interest for the subject dealt with

Have the respondents become more sensitive to these questions through the discussion

Sustainable Food: Concepts

- A Sustainable food means a diversity of food products that keep the characteristics and taste from each area of land.

It is the opposite of industrial scale farming which tends to develop standardized produce with no character.

We must react against this trend, otherwise future generations will lose the sense of taste and the pleasure to enjoy the foodstuffs and dishes which we have inherited from the traditions of each country and each region.

B Sustainable food is foodstuffs which we can trust because they are wholesome and have been produced with care for nature and the environment: with minimum usage of fertilizers and chemicals, and by observing natural conditions in animal breeding and welfare.

C The food industry makes available products which are often of decent quality, convenient to store and use, and at reasonable prices.

But we know less and less how those products are made, which ingredients and additives are used, and what health consequences they may have in the shorter or longer term.

D Certain companies in the food industry and certain retail chains are making real efforts to develop a range of food products that stick to the rules of sustainable development: by buying from local producers who are committed to observing clearly specified crop growing and animal breeding practices that are environmentally friendly; by fair trade agreements with producers in Third World countries; by clear and transparent methods of industrial food processing.

We should buy more from those brands and those retailers.

E Two scenarios for the future:

Scenario one: agriculture based on very large farms, concentrated in the most profitable pieces of land, all growing the same crops along several dozens of kilometres, and a “rural desert” in other areas where land is left neglected.

Scenario two: a system making it possible to keep medium sized farms everywhere, with a variety of crops and preserving the diversity of shapes and colours of our landscape.

Which of these scenarios do we want?

F Less intensive farming, less mechanized, using less fertilizers and chemicals, is a system that takes social concerns into account.

Firstly, by preserving jobs in the agricultural sector and thus avoiding adding to unemployment.

Secondly, by keeping alive our rural areas and countryside. A village where there are no longer any farmers is often a village in which local craftsmen and shops gradually close down, followed by the post office and the local pub; either it just dies or it becomes a soulless dormitory village without any local life.

G Mankind is dangerously playing the sorcerer’s apprentice in developing food production methods that turn their back on the laws of nature. In just a few decades, if we go on following this path, the earth’s natural resources will be irreversibly damaged.

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The King Baudouin Foundation

Helping to improve living conditions for the population www.kbs-frb.be

The King Baudouin Foundation is a public benefit foundation founded in 1976, the 25th year in the reign of King Baudouin. The foundation is independent and pluralistic. We work to improve living conditions for the population.

The Foundation has total annual expenditures of 39 million Euro. This allows us to achieve a fair number of things for society, but we cannot do everything. This is why we have chosen to focus our efforts on certain priority themes that we adapt to the changing conditions in society. Our core programmes in the years to come are: Social Justice, Civil Society, Governance and Funds & Contemporary Philanthropy.

The 'Social Justice' programme seeks out new forms of social inequality and supports initiatives to give greater autonomy to the people at greatest risk. With the 'Civil Society' programme, we encourage citizens to become involved and support the work of associations. The 'Governance' programme seeks to involve citizens more closely in the decision-making that determines how goods and services are produced and consumed, and in developments in the medical sciences. Through the 'Funds & Contemporary Philanthropy' programme, the Foundation seeks to encourage modern forms of generosity. The Foundation provides information to donors and offers them an entire range of philanthropic tools.

In addition to these four core programmes, the Foundation is also engaged in several 'Specific and structural initiatives'. We are carrying out a project on the development of the European district of Brussels, support Child Focus and have entered into a structural partnership with the European Policy Centre.

Let us emphasise again that all our programmes and projects attach particular importance to cultural diversity and to a balanced gender approach.

We combine a variety of working methods to achieve our objectives. We support third party projects, develop our own projects on various themes, organise seminars and round-table discussions bringing together experts and citizens, set up groups to reflect on current and future issues, bring people with very different views together at the same table and put the information we gather in this way together in the form of (free) reports and publications.

As a European foundation in Belgium, the King Baudouin Foundation is active at local, regional, federal, European and international level. We of course make use of the fact that we are based in Brussels, the capital of Europe, of Belgium and of the two large Communities of our country.

Please find further information about our projects on our website: www.kbs-frb.be
For practical details: please e-mail: info@kbs-frb.be or telephone +32 70 233 728
King Baudouin Foundation, rue Brederodestraat 21, B-1000 Brussels
tel.: +32 2 511 18 40, fax: +32 2 511 52 21

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