



# **UN OU DES MODELES AGRICOLES EUROPEENS ?**

**Lundi 30 mars 2009, Londres**

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## SUMMARY

Within the European Union Agriculture has traditionally been an issue on which France and Britain have had very different views. France has normally seen itself as the defender of the Common Agricultural Policy. Britain on the other hand has been one of the CAP's most strident critics. Yet the FBC's seminar on Agriculture, held in London in March 2009 succeeded in taking a fresh look at the subject in the light of the changing international economic and environmental context. Under the chairmanship of Joyce Quin and Marion Guillou views from participants from both countries were wide-ranging and unстереotypical, and tended towards a large measure of agreement both about the issues which needed to be tackled for the future and about what kind of measures might be effective in addressing those issues.

Conclusions included:

Environmental considerations would be paramount in European agricultural policy in the future and would have to be taken full account of both within EU countries and on the wider international level.

Europe had to take its international responsibilities very seriously in both agricultural and environmental negotiations and be conscious of the links between the two.

While governments had their role to play the task of ensuring a sustainable agricultural future would also involve changing behaviour by farmers and consumers.

Governments had to respond quickly to scientific and biological information – for example regarding the honeybee crisis. France and Britain should work together on these issues.

There were evolving views on the future of the CAP in both countries. Both countries recognised the importance of Pillar II of the CAP dealing with rural development and considered that this had the potential to use EU funds more satisfactorily and flexibly than had been the case in the past. It was felt that the public were more likely to see agricultural spending as justified if it seemed to be delivering environmental benefits as well as quality food and a better way of life for rural areas.

This report of the seminar by Joyce Quin, provides an overview of the opinions and comments of the participants and of the conclusions which were reached.

The Author:

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## **INTRODUCTION**

London's Horticultural Halls provided the appropriate setting for the Franco-British Council to discuss the future of Agricultural Policy in Europe. While traditionally the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has evoked different views and approaches in France and Britain this seminar brought participants from both countries together in common concern at how this policy should develop for the future, and how it could fit in to the wider international and environmental priorities of the European Union. It was evident from the beginning of the seminar that all participants were keen to look forward and try to agree together what new approaches would be necessary. The French Ambassador to the UK, Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, in his opening remarks, set the scene deftly. He drew attention to the timeliness of the discussion, and reminded us that the EU had to look outward, given the "triple shock" of climate change, energy supply shortages and price volatility. He stressed too that imaginative policies, moving away from stereotypical arguments, would be needed to face environmental and agricultural challenges; a point which guided and informed the thinking of participants for much of the discussion which ensued.

## **EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL MODELS: ONE OR SEVERAL?**

The discussion began with the co-chairs, Joyce Quin and Marion Guillou outlining the context in which the various themes and ideas would be considered. There were ongoing discussions within the EU about how the CAP would be reshaped after 2013 as well as negotiations about the EU budget of which agriculture is still a significant part. Agriculture was also key to gaining agreement in the Doha trade round. Ensuring adequate and safe world food production and supply were matters of universal concern as was the link between agriculture and environmental sustainability.

### **Session I: The global framework for Agriculture.**

The introductions led neatly into Session I which focussed on the global context and the challenge of producing enough food to feed 9 billion people by 2050. Michel Petit pointed out in his opening remarks that the question of how to feed the world's future population begged other questions such as who is going to produce this food and how is its distribution to be ensured. He believed that in seeking to achieve an adequate world food supply production would not only have to increase, it would have to be sustainable. Greater research in agriculture would have an important role in this. Financing would be important from both public and private sectors. He also felt that in the developed world agricultural producers and agriculturalists would have to pay attention to dietary trends and be part of the quest to combat obesity and promote healthier eating habits. To deal adequately with the needs of developing and developed countries better international agreements and even forms of global governance would be necessary. Michel Petit's points were reinforced by Andrew Simms in his introduction, particularly in relation to the environment. He pointed out that one billion of the world's poor were starving and drew attention to the problems of global drought. He argued that "obesity too is a climate change issue" since we should consume less of what contributes to climate change, pointing out that livestock

production accounted for 20 per cent of all emissions. It was a tragic irony that the number of overweight people was equal to that of those starving.

In the general discussion there was broad agreement that the issue of climate change must now dominate thinking on future global agricultural policies. Science must not pander to politician's and economist's ideas: policies had to recognise scientific and environmental realities. Because of this while different agricultural models were possible these had to be compatible with the overall goals of environmental sustainability and meeting global food needs.

## Session II What Agricultural models do we want for Europe?

The discussion was opened by Sir Donald Curry who had chaired the Policy Commission on Food and Farming. He reminded participants that the Commission had concluded in favour of decoupling farm support from production and had pronounced in favour of the principle of public support for public goods. Intervention in the market was only to be favoured when the market was failing to deliver those public goods. Sir Donald also stressed that the EU and its member states, in evolving their policies, had to remember the wider international challenges and not ignore them. Within that overall context however it was possible to have a number of different models. He made the point that even within the UK different models existed with the 4 countries within the UK having developed some different approaches while applying EU policy. He described the way that England had fully decoupled support from production and was moving to an area-based payment system. It was accepted that farmers should focus on their markets more than responding to subsidy levels or what was available from the public purse. Farmers were also discovering new business opportunities, reconnecting with their markets, with their consumers and with the environment. While transferring more resources to the rural development part of the CAP was wise, a balance needed to be struck at each stage of that process and due account taken on the social impact of change and the situation in remote areas. The future CAP needed to be more flexible than in the past, so that the variety of local and national situations could be addressed effectively.

In his Introduction Hervé Guyomard also stressed the diversity of European Agriculture and that enlargement of the EU in 2004 had brought in further differences and changes. While the traditional CAP still had an influence in discussions on ideas for the development of European Agricultural models it was far less important than in the past. He felt that 5 principal motors would drive policy; world economic growth, energy, the Doha trade round, the environment and CAP reform. He felt that the objectives for a reformed CAP should include risk management (to stabilise markets) and public money targeted at changing systems to make them more respectful of the environment, rural and land development, along with better organisation of producers and food safety.

The ensuing discussion was wide-ranging. It included consideration of what type of farms and what size of farms best suited the environment. However the answer was not straightforward. Bernard Bachelier felt that the reduction in the number of farms was not something necessarily to be resisted (check with his paper) since this was part of a natural sociological change and the farmers who were left on the land tended to

be better integrated into society. However it was also pointed out that consumers are very interested in purchasing organic and very local types of produce and food and that opportunities would continue to exist for small-scale producers. It was generally felt that a variety of models and types could successfully co-exist. There was a feeling that direct payments were to be preferred to price support mechanisms but a feeling too that farmers needed to rely less on direct payments overall and build more resilient businesses. There was strong support for the transfer of more resources to Pillar 2 of the CAP dealing with rural development and a strong belief that a commitment to the environment must permeate all possible agricultural models.

### Session III

Session III was devoted to considering the policies that would be needed on various levels – European, national and regional – to deliver the viable agricultural models and structures, discussed in Session II. Again the usefulness of Pillar II of the CAP was referred to by several speakers as helping to create a flexible, market-oriented but environmentally-sustainable approach.

Antoine Herth outlined some of the efforts being made by France, in particular through the Forum “Grenelle de l’Environnement” which has prioritised environmental considerations in agricultural policy. This has involved looking at the energy and water use aspects of agriculture. Action was felt to be needed quickly but it was obviously not easy to change behaviour and attitudes overnight. While agriculture employed far fewer people than was traditionally the case it still occupied a vital role and, taking into account the people employed upstream and downstream from agriculture some 14% of the French economy was involved.

Susan Armstrong-Brown said that agriculture, as a major provider of public goods, was in a special situation which needed to be recognised. A productive agricultural base for food production was necessary, but biodiversity objectives also needed to be met. Social and cultural concerns needed to be factored in alongside the all-important climate change objectives which had been agreed. A big effort would be needed to reconcile the desirable degree of subsidiarity in agricultural policy (to respond to regional and local differences and needs) and EU wide consistency. This needed an agreed and effective EU framework and principles which should be more clearly defined. Pillar II had established a good framework and an EU wide approval system as well as some good co-financing mechanisms which secured “buy-in” at local and national, as well as European level.

She also said that while Britain talked a lot about the importance of deregulation this could sometimes disguise the reality which was that agriculture continued to receive high levels of subsidies and will have to continue to do so if the necessary public goods were to be delivered. Worthwhile efforts to bring farmers closer to their markets therefore had to be seen within that overall context.

Points made during the discussion amplified the way that views of the CAP were changing in both countries albeit from previously very different starting positions. Both countries were focused on the importance of agricultural research and both had increasingly stressed environmental objectives, although there was some concern that agriculture alone could not deliver all environmental goals and that there had to be a wide partnership, involving public and private sectors, in order to secure these.

## Session IV

Session 4 brought into play the wider rural development agenda and looked at what rural policies were desirable and how these should relate to agricultural policy and objectives.

Bertrand Schmitt noted that although there had been a significant rural exodus over many years there was also now a trend for retired people and for young couples with children to move to the countryside. While the earnings gap between rural and urban areas was still marked there were also sharp disparities within rural areas. European rural development policy currently does not tackle sufficiently effectively the issues of inequality within rural areas, accessibility issues and quality of services

Stuart Burgess noted similar migration movements in Britain to those in France with both retired people and couples between 36-48 moving to the countryside. He also stressed the importance of tackling social exclusion issues and transport issues in rural areas. He underlined the fact that rural and urban communities are actually dependent on each other and a too-artificial distinction between them should therefore not be drawn. Jobs in urban areas were often linked to economic activity in the rural areas and vice versa.

In the discussion, while different views were expressed about how far a move into rural areas could or should counteract problems of urbanisation, there was agreement that other policies such as transport, development and environment policies have to be adapted alongside agricultural policy and they should not be developed in isolation from each other. It was also agreed that policies on rural development should take heed of the disparities within and between rural areas. It was also agreed, particularly following the local examples at village level described by Helen Browning, that local initiatives and actions could have a significant effect and could serve as models of good practice elsewhere if their results were disseminated.

## Conclusions

1. Environmental considerations and goals were essential to be fully taken account of in European and international agricultural policies.
2. Agriculture, like the environment, required actions at every level; local, regional, national, European and international.

3. It is not just government action which is important. Changing behaviour, diets, attitudes are also vital.
4. Governments have to be guided by the state of scientific and biological knowledge.
5. In both France and Britain it is striking that views towards the CAP are and have been changing. The disadvantages of some traditional aspects of the policy are apparent to both, and the advantages of placing greater stress on Pillar II of the policy, dealing with rural development, have become clearer in both countries. Pillar II has been revealed as being a more flexible policy instrument, adaptable to the different agricultural situations in different regions and countries. It has shown itself capable of promoting diversification, of helping farmers to find outlets and customers, and of respecting and enhancing the natural environment.
6. It was felt that if funds spent on agriculture and farmers were linked into the delivery of public goods, and into environmental, social and rural development goals, money spent on agriculture could command public support.
7. Participants considered that within an overall framework a variety of agricultural models and structures were both possible and desirable.
8. France and Britain should cooperate more on research and together could form a stronger core within the future (EU?) group on food security.
9. Although the challenges, not least as far as the environmental dimension was concerned, were very considerable the degree of consensus which existed and which could be built on gave cause for optimism as well as calling for commitment and determination.

## LUNCHTIME SPEECH by COLIN TUDGE

### AGRICULTURE – A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

In a freethinking, wide ranging, thought-provoking and entertaining speech Colin Tudge threw down a number of agricultural gauntlets.

He felt that the history of agriculture and agricultural policy in recent years had left us in a “deep hole.” Public agricultural policy had vandalised the countryside and had flown in the face of scientific and biological realities. He had set up the “Campaign for Enlightened Agriculture” (now called “The Campaign for Real Farming”) to change farming and bring about its renaissance. This campaign recognised that agriculture was not like other businesses, and that around 70% of land area was affected by it and that it was a provider and controller of major public benefits.

Colin acknowledged and stressed the size of the problem of being able to feed 9 billion people by 2050 but affirmed his strong belief that if particular policies and approaches were pursued this was achievable.

He questioned whether we really needed to double output, suggesting that we are already producing enough to feed the present population so we should be able to respond to the challenge and solve the problem effectively.

He said it is necessary simply to design agriculture “*Expressly to feed people without wrecking the rest of the world*” as opposed to designing agriculture to conform to a prescribed economic model. Sound biology and morality must come first, with the economic structure adjusted accordingly. Such “Enlightened Agriculture” would inevitably produce “*lots of plants, not much meat and maximum variety.*” This, he said, also accorded perfectly with the recommendations of modern nutritionists and described the basic structure of all the world’s finest cuisines, from Italy via Turkey to China. In other words good sustainable farming, sound nutrition and great cooking go hand in hand. He proposed the slogan: “*The future belongs to the gourmet*”.

Looking at the global situation Colin Tudge also felt that more self-reliance in agriculture was necessary within each country, with reliance on imports being restricted to those commodities, which could not be produced locally. He criticised the tendency to see agriculture as a business like any other.

He also contended that much more should be done in developing countries to make agrarian life more agreeable. In many countries the agrarian economy needed to be restored to achieve a better balance against the urban, industrial economy.

(More information about Colin Tudge’s campaigning work and relevant articles can be found on <http://campaignforrealfarming.blogspot.com>).

# Agenda

09.00 Coffee

09.15 Welcome and introduction by Joyce Quin and Marion Guillou

**09.45 Session I: The global framework for agriculture**

introduced by Michel Petit and Andrew Simms

- Farming in the long term and world food supplies
- International policies: marketing, environmental, food industry, relations between the Western countries and the Third World.

General discussion

11.15 Break

**11.30 Session II: What agricultural model or models do we want for Europe?**

introduced by Sir Donald Curry and Hervé Guyomard

- What are the main European objectives? Secure food supply? environmental protection? rural employment? competitiveness? risk management?
- How can we respond to the different agricultural contexts within Europe?

General discussion

12:45 Lunch followed by keynote speech from Colin Tudge *A personal perspective*  
*Cheeses supplied by Neal's Yard*

**14.30 Session III: What policies are needed to achieve these? On a European, national and regional level?**

introduced by Antoine Herth and Susan Armstrong-Brown

- Policy tools: public support? price stabilisation and security measures?
- Community or national financing?

General discussion

**15.45 Session IV: What rural policies do we want and how should they relate to agricultural policies?**

introduced by Bertrand Schmitt and Stuart Burgess

- What challenges are faced by Europeans living and working in rural areas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- Looking at the future: are European or national policies more suitable?

General discussion

17.15 Conclusions

17.30 Close

## BRITISH PARTICIPANTS

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**Helen BROWNING**

Farmer

Food & Farming Director of the Soil Association

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Créé en 1972 à l'initiative du Président Georges Pompidou et du Premier ministre Edward Heath, le Conseil franco-britannique a pour vocation de renforcer les liens entre les deux pays en favorisant le dialogue entre des personnalités politiques, des hauts fonctionnaires, des économistes, des chercheurs et des journalistes dans des domaines aussi variés que l'économie, l'environnement, la défense ou la culture.

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