



Groupe de Bruges

**CHINA EUROPA FORUM
WORKSHOP T43c:
What agricultural policies? What contribution of China and Europe in a global
agricultural policy?**

**Report on the first preparatory workshop
held in Prague on June 27 2009**

Participants:

Name	First name	Country	Organisation
Chiodo	Emilio	Italy	Groupe de Bruges
Fico	Fatos	Albania	Groupe de Bruges
Hecker	Edwin	Holland	Groupe de Bruges
Josse	Sofie	Sweden	Groupe de Bruges
Linhart	Zdenek	Czeck Rep.	Groupe de Bruges
Simon	Attila	Hungary	Groupe de Bruges
Soldaat	Bart	Holland	Groupe de Bruges
Sotte	Franco	Italy	Groupe de Bruges
Herda	Gerhard	Czech Rep.	Organisation of Oilseed Producers and Processors
Bolor Sukhee	Oyun	Mongolia	PhD student Czech Ministry of Agriculture
Hruba	Renata	Czech Rep.	Groupe de Bruges
Stauder	Márta	Hungary	

Mrs Svarcova, a farmer with precision farming technology on 800 ha, unfortunately was unable to attend the workshop

Goal and framework of the meeting

The workshop is a first event in the process leading up to the Third Biennial China Europa Forum which will take place in July 2010. The workshop has been made financially possible through a grant by the Fondation pour le Progrès de l'Homme (FPH). Participation at the China Europa Forum will be facilitated and financially supported by the China Europa Foundation.

The mission statement of the Forum is:

“The China-Europa Forum is a society-to-society dialog process of a new kind to take up our common challenges. It is a great opportunity to strengthen the dialog between European and Chinese societies and within each society.

Representatives of all sectors and of all socioprofessional backgrounds take up subjects of concern to them and discuss the issues that are common to our contemporary societies. Participants' individual experiences are the starting point of continuous debates on the Internet, as well as at biennial meetings organised alternately in China and in Europe.

Dialog is the expression of diversity and unity. It reflects, all at the same time, the deep diversity of every society, the many differences between China and Europe and the unity of the challenges the two societies are facing (see also www.china-europa-forum.net”).

The Forum hosts a wide variety of workshops on numerous topics. The workshops are divided into two main categories, socio-professional and thematic. The categories are divided into 9 groups, with each group consisting of a number of workshops. Each workshop is managed by a Chinese and a European organisation, so called prime movers. For the workshop “What agricultural policies? What contribution of China and Europe in a global agricultural policy”, the Groupe de Bruges was asked to be the European prime mover. The GdB has accepted this, with Bart Soldaat as first contact. The Chinese prime mover is the School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development of the Renmin University of China in Beijing. First contact is professor Wen Tiejun. The workshop is in group T4, Objectives, methods and levels of governance from local to global.

In the previous months contacts have been established with the Chinese prime mover to discuss the general framework and main questions for the workshop. In July 2009 the prime movers will meet in Paris. This workshop will be a start and will act as input for the meeting in Paris. Before discussing policies we first have to look at what will be the major developments for the coming decades that will set the agenda for policies at the different levels.

Methodology used

Each participants was given yellow stick-on papers (Post-it). Participants used the papers to indicate what are, in their view, the most important issues concerning agriculture and rural development, one issue per paper. Subsequently these papers were grouped into categories; the definition of categories and the allocation of the papers to the categories was done as an interactive exercise by the whole group.

Then the participants were give each 10 green stickers. They were asked to attach the stickers to those issues they thought would the most crucial for the future. They were free in their choice how to allocate the stickers. Based on this a prioritisation could be made on what categories and what issues were judged the most crucial and subsequently which categories and issues were less or not crucial.

Results: issues and categories

The following issues were listed and categorized:

1. Food supply chains
 - Who controls the food chain: farmers, consumers, food industry, retailers, policy?
 - Fair trade also for Europe?
 - Agro-ecological entrepreneurs versus global business

2. Production, ownership and dissemination of information
 - Who controls access to information?
 - Role of the media in maintaining or changing the image of agriculture
 - The role of the new media in democratic control
 - The influence of the information society on the agri-food chain
 - Transfer of information in and to agricultural sector
 - The fundamental role of research necessitates a strategy for research
 - It is difficult for consumers to know what they eat; consumers are confused and apathetic
 - The role of WTO in promoting knowledge transfer in renewable energy, especially in developing countries

3. Sustainable agricultural production and environment
 - What is sustainable agriculture: organic or life cycle approach?
 - Efficient use of water
 - The condition and fertility of soils
 - Abandonment of small farms in developed countries in relationship to the protection of European landscapes
 - The high impact of agriculture on the environment

4. Developments in agricultural trade and markets
 - Development in markets for agricultural commodities, from local to international
 - Crises will become more interlinked (finance, food, industry, environment) on a global level
 - Not 'how do we feed the world', but 'what does the world want to eat'.
 - Consumers do not pay for the food what it really costs. Costs are still externalised to the environments and future generations
 - How to feed 9 billion people in 2050?
 - Effects of liberalised trade on oligopolistic and oligopsonistic markets, such as the food commodities market
 - How to increase food production in developing countries?
 - The growing competition between industrialised agriculture and poor farmers in developing countries for land use, water and other resources

5. Developments in food consumption
 - The relationship between food and health
 - Not all consumers have the resources to consume sustainably
 - Not all the people feel the need to consume sustainably
 - Food will have a different function, as tool for human health
 - Healthy food for children in schools
 - A changing definition of quality which is completely different and much more complex
 - Food safety and food security for the next generation

6. The multifunctionality of agriculture and rural areas
 - The development and interaction of the different roles of agriculture: food, feed, fibre, fuel, fun and flowers.
 - The relationship between agricultural and rural development
 - Agriculture as a net provider of renewable energy
 - Agriculture as net sequestrator of carbon dioxide
 - How to keep the countryside viable?
 - Find ways to motivate rural people to stay in the rural areas
 - Preserving the role of rural areas and agriculture as job provider

- How to overcome the generation gap in agriculture: new ideas versus old practices
 - Do and should small farms have a future?
7. The relationship between city and countryside, urban and rural
- We need a different approach for the city-countryside relationships
 - How to involve consumers in the debate on the future of agriculture?
 - Respect for life practices of rural people
 - The arrival of people from developing countries to Europe
8. Public support and policies for agriculture
- What public support for agriculture?
 - From subsidizing agriculture to agriculture that can get income from the market through better prices
 - From a policy for agriculture to a policy for the whole food sector
 - Are non-trade concerns real or disguised protectionism?
 - What is the place and value of agriculture and the agricultural society?
9. Developments in technology
- The role of technology to come to a sustainable agriculture
 - Technical research mainly for industrialised agriculture and not for problems of small farms.
 - Can Europe afford to remain against GMO's in agriculture?

Prioritisation and discussion

In the subsequent round of prioritisation it became clear that most priority was given to the questions concerning the developments in the (global) food supply chains and in production, ownership and dissemination of information with the keywords being control and governance. Apparently fewer and fewer people, institutions and companies have control over both the food supply chains and over the production and dissemination of information, both scientific and media information. This means that a small and decreasing group of stakeholders (mainly private research companies, food traders/processors and retailers) will determine the future of agriculture globally. Developments in all the other categories seem to be dependent on the outcomes of these processes and the decisions made by these stakeholders: they determine demand, prices and the concepts of food quality, sustainable production, multifunctionality and the survival or disappearance of certain types of agriculture in a policy context of trade liberalisation. As the general public is unaware or not able to access relevant information, they can not act as a countervailing power. Public bodies have increasing difficulties in getting a grip on these developments. Their policy aimed at liberalisation and increased competition reinforces this trend.

This outcome would also explain why relative low priority was given to so called big issues like feeding the world in 2050 and sustainability. Regarding these themes the questions would rather be what do consumers want and what policies should be aimed at consumers. A new approach has to be developed in which the true cost of production is internalised in the consumer prices. Of course this policy should differentiate between different groups of consumers, notably between poor and wealthy consumers. This new policy should also entail better labelling systems, information and education programmes and the safeguarding and promotion of the diversity in food cultures.

Also the theme multifunctionality, a term invented by the GdB in the nineties, did not get a high priority. The feeling is that the term over the years and during the general debate has been increasingly misused. We probably need a new concept in which also new issues can

be integrated such as the role of labour migration and the role and position of small farms. A new concept should also leave more room for different definitions in different countries and regions of the world. It will have another meaning in China or in Africa than it will have in Europe or the USA. Generally speaking we can see a two gear process evolving, with most of Europe and the USA at one hand and the rest of the world with another definition of multifunctionality. Diversity should therefore lay at the heart of this new concept, not as a problem, but as an asset on which territorial approaches can be developed. A notion which will also put the term Less Favoured Areas on his head: each area should make a SWOT analysis to assess in what ways it has a comparative advantage.

Concerning supply chains we have to consider that in the food supply chains a oligarchic market structure has evolved with an hour glass shaped form: a great number of producers and consumers at either end and a small and decreasing number of traders, processors and retailers in between. In an oligarchic market there is a constant threat of either price wars or the formation of kartels. It is here where the future of agriculture will be decided: who is in control, who make the decisions, how do these decisions affect the other actors in the chain? What are the dependent and independent variables?

Another crucial battleground is that of information. As more and more research is funded by private companies, the question what independent information is, becomes more important. There seems to be a contradiction that through the new media more stakeholders can get information and can influence the decision making process, but on the other hand research information becomes more and more private.

Participants agree that other items such as the ageing of farmers, water use, the effects of climate change, the effects of big companies moving into agriculture on land use and rural development are relevant for the future of agriculture and should be in the domain of policy makers, but to a lesser degree than the fundamental matters concerning control over the market and control over information and technology.

Finally, participants conclude that this new prioritisation is not part of the CAP and there is little evidence that it will be at the heart of the CAP post 2013. We are now more or less held prisoner by the CAP and the traditional lobby groups that allow only modifications of the old regime.