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THE NEW CONTEXT
OF AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT
IN THE WORLD



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The new context of agricultural development in the world

Summary

These notes aim to analyse the new context of agricultural development in the world. Their hypothesis is that this new context constitutes a historical break for agricultural policies. Indeed, above and beyond the soaring prices of agricultural produce, all the indicators come together to mark the end of an era: the World Bank report, international negotiations and reforms to agricultural policies, philanthropic news, environmental demands and the strengthening of civil society. This leads to new questions about planning, public policies and the actions of businesses being posed.

The priority is to channel investment into agriculture and its intensification for the benefit especially of African countries whose numerous agricultural populations have land and water but lack the means to use them more profitably.

But the use of this investment must be based on a new concept of the relationship between farmers, the other private actors and public authorities whose functions must be redefined following liberalisation and privatisation reforms. A situation such as this has not presented itself for several decades. It is the responsibility of all of us to turn this into an opportunity for the farmers of these countries.

Agriculture has returned to being one of the world's top priorities. Satisfying the agricultural needs of the planet is re-becoming a strategic challenge. Public opinion and decision-makers are becoming aware of the risks of shortages and once again are taking an interest in agricultural production.

This return to agriculture has been triggered by the rise in agricultural prices on the international markets which accelerated during the first quarter of 2008 and led to food riots. We are becoming or re-becoming aware that agricultural produce, like other raw materials, even if it is renewable, does not escape from the risk of becoming scarce, at least temporarily.

In this context, the fact that the World Bank has devoted its 2008 annual report to agriculture is symbolic. All the more so since the previous time the World Bank conferred this place to agriculture was in 1982. This initiative, springing independently from the increase in prices, marks a break in the debate over development policies.

This situation means that the discussions over the reforms of agricultural policies such as the common agricultural policy, the negotiations over international trade and those over economic partnership agreements take on a sharp new relevance. The question of knowing if agriculture and food supplies have specific characteristics which justify particular treatment for them in trade regulations is no longer so quickly ruled out.

These developments are also concurrent with environmental issues taking an increasingly wider place in the conception of economic development and an increasing recognition that agriculture is the main user of natural resources such as land, water and the bio-sphere.

At the same time, the new participants in worldwide philanthropy and notably the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, confer to agriculture an important place alongside health, in its support for the poorest countries.

The purpose of this essay is to detail the major features of these developments and to discuss the issues and consequences that may be envisaged for forecasting debates, the structure of agricultural policies in the countries of the Southern hemisphere and the strategies for farming organisations and development actors.

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① The increase in agricultural prices on world markets

The price of wheat increased by 36% between the 2003-2004 and 2006-2007 crop seasons and that of maize by 63%. For its part, the price of rice which rose by 27% between these same harvests has experienced record rises in the first few months of 2008 of around 50% compared to the average 2007 price. Oil seeds and milk have also experienced an increase in world prices. Agricultural produce is part of the same upward trend undergone by all raw materials. Not since the 1970s have the markets seen such increases.

During the first few months of this year, the prices of foodstuffs have soared causing hunger riots and demonstrations by urban consumers in several importing countries of Africa and Asia. For their own part, countries traditionally producing surpluses have banned exports in order to favour internal consumption.

Moreover, price forecasting studies are predicting that agricultural prices will remain high over the next decade.

There are several factors which account for this trend:

- A growing demand for bio-fuels caused by American, European and Brazilian policies. The demand for bio-fuels depends to a large extent on incentive policies in North America and in Europe, but it is also closely linked to oil prices;
- Food needs resulting from population growth;
- New demand especially for animal produce, but also oil seeds, brought about by increased income in emerging countries such as China and India.

To these structural factors can be added cyclical causes, such as climatic vagaries like the drought Australia has been going through for the last several years. From this point of view, there is the question of knowing if climate change may have definite and long-lasting implications in the coming years.

In fact, more than an increase in demand, the structural cause of this situation comes from a slow down in production. The reduction in stocks is partly due to the reform of public policies in Europe and North America which has been successful in controlling surpluses and a levelling-out of yields brought about by the lowering of investment in the agricultural sector.

To this can be added substituting some types of crops for others brought about by changes in markets and demand. Thus it would appear that China has lost a non-negligible surface area of rice crops to other agricultural uses such as arboriculture or to non-agricultural uses.

Consequently in 2007, world rice production only increased by 1% with 642.2 million tonnes of paddy rice compared to 2006 with 636.4 million tonnes. FAO forecasts show a very small increase (0.5%) in 2008 whereas consumption will rise by 1.1% and stocks are decreasing.

Overall, the continuing rise of agricultural prices on the world markets is acting as an alarm call. The risks of food shortages exist both on a worldwide scale and for regional economic blocs. This alarm call is a reminder of the importance of public policies for agricultural production.

This is a reversal of the previous trend and began at the beginning of the century after fifteen years of a continuous fall in agricultural prices. And from this point of view, it can offer new prospects for farmers' development.

However, it raises several questions:

- Is the rise in world agricultural prices truly long-lived? Apart from animal produce, this concerns annual crops for which a quickly usable production reservoir can be assumed, whether this is by reusing fallow land or marginal regions, or increasing yields by intensification and the introduction of technological innovation. History shows that high prices encourage an increase in production which corrects the imbalance between supply and demand.
- Who benefits from high prices? For developing countries, and especially for little intensified farming practices in Africa, do world prices lead to a rise in local prices for producers? This question is fundamental for development policies. For decades, farmers from countries of the Southern hemisphere, especially the Africans and their partners, complained of the weakness of agricultural prices laying the responsibility on subsidised exports by the developed countries. World prices increase according to the play of the market. Do internal prices increase too? Under what conditions do African farmers benefit from this?
- Although the market is steadily rising, this does not remove short-term fluctuations in the markets and does not even exclude the risk of periods of falls. However, in the event of a temporary fall, the most serious losses will affect the most vulnerable people, i.e. those who have neither the instruments for forecasting nor for covering these market risks.
- Finally, there is the issue of the negative consequences of the increase in the prices of raw materials on those which are production factors especially fertilizers and fuels. For livestock farmers to the increase in cattle feed prices there is also the issue of them being bought up for example, for poultry farming.

If a round of high agricultural prices is confirmed, this trend may offer an opportunity for agriculture in developing countries. However favourable world markets do not guarantee by themselves satisfactory selling prices for producers. Public incentive policies, market regulation, the covering of risks and access to means of investment remain, more than ever, indispensable if farmers in countries with many constraints are to benefit from this context.

② The World Development Report 2008: "Agriculture for Development"

The World Bank dedicated its 2008 annual report, its thirtieth, to agriculture. This was the first time since 1982 that it had chosen this topic as a main area of study. This initial observation is in itself an event. To a certain extent, the 1982 report closed an era dominated by agricultural questions, the fight against large scale famines and the success of the green revolution. Norman Borlaug, born in 1914 had received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his contribution to the green revolution by developing varieties of high-yielding and disease-resistant wheat. Gradually, the World Bank became more interested in social, environmental or macro-economic issues.

A return towards agriculture is driven by the impossibility of getting round the farming issue for countries with an agricultural vocation and whose gross domestic product depends essentially on agriculture and which has a mainly rural population.

It is to this effect that the World Bank report marks a major change. It recognises that "agriculture continues to be a fundamental instrument for sustainable development and poverty reduction". Three-quarters of the poor inhabitants of developing countries live in rural areas – 2.1 billion people have less than two dollars and for 880 million of them, less than one dollar a day to live on – and most of them practise subsistence agriculture.

Apart from it simply existing, several aspects of the report are worth highlighting:

- The separation of developing countries into three groups
 - Agriculture-based countries in which the population is possibly rural and which draws its resources from agriculture. These countries are mainly countries from Sub-Saharan Africa. The report states that these countries have a population of 417 million making up 82% of their overall population. Agriculture is responsible for 30% of the growth of their GDP.
 - Transforming countries in which agriculture is no longer the major source of economic growth (13% on average of GDP) but in which a majority of the population remains rural. These countries include China, India, Indonesia and Morocco. They are mainly located in Asia and the Near-East and have over 2.2 billion rural inhabitants. The evolution of the agricultural and rural population is one of the key problems of the future in these countries.
 - Urbanised countries in which the rural population is a minority (26% on average). These countries have 255 million rural inhabitants. Agriculture makes up 6% of their Gross Domestic Product on average. These countries are mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This typology has the advantage of avoiding a uniform presentation that does not take into account the diversity of changes, even if it must be qualified by contrasts between the types of agriculture practised within each economic group.

- The recognition of the various functions of agriculture. The report recognises three general types of functions that agriculture fulfils.
 - Economic activity that should be analysed according to the contribution of agricultural production to trade, tax and customs receipts by governments, to farmers' income and to the development of food processing industries.
 - Agriculture as a means of subsistence. The report notes that "Of the developing world's 5.5 billion people, 3 billion live in rural areas, nearly half of humanity. Of these rural inhabitants an estimated 2.5 billion are in households involved in agriculture, and 1.5 billion are in smallholder households".

These figures remind us of the demographic and social extent of the agricultural issue. They also remind us of the role of smallholder production in the security of the world's food.

- Environmental functions of agriculture. The report acknowledges the contrasting relationships agriculture has with regard to the environment. Agriculture uses natural resources and can have negative effects on water, soils, biodiversity and deforestation, but agriculture can also have useful effects on the environment: a fixing of carbon, management of watersheds, the preservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of landscapes.

This recognition of the multiple functional nature that agriculture can play should have consequences for public policies.

- Following the logic of what has been stated, the report recommends giving priority to small scale agriculture – which we may interpret as meaning smallholder farming – and at the geographical level in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- But the report observes the weakness of public investment in agriculture: 4% of public development aid (compared with 12% in 1990) and 4% of public expenditure in Sub-Saharan Africa compared with 10% in transforming countries during the 1980s). However, the report observes that growth in GDP attributable to agriculture contributes at least twice as much in reducing poverty as growth in GDP attributable to the non-agricultural sector.
- The report broaches the issue of public involvement and a reassessment of the role of governments: regulations, incentive policies, investment in infrastructure and public assets, public-private partnerships and the development of markets.

The report deserves credit in reminding us about what we could call “basics”, or at any rate types of action which are indispensable for agricultural development such as:

- The improvement in access to land, water, health and education;
- The increase in the quality and amount of public investment;
- The improvement in the operation of product and input markets;
- The improvement of access to financial services and a “reduction in the degree of exposure to risks for non-insured farmers”;
- The strengthening of the performance of producers’ organisations;
- The promotion of innovation through science and technology;
- The development of more sustainable production systems and an increase in environmental services.

On the other hand, the World Bank report presents a very orthodox approach on several key points.

- The organisation of market and the regulation of trade

The report calls for greater encouragement through prices via a complete liberalisation of trade. It recognises however that “the main beneficiaries of such trade liberalisation would be especially Brazil, Thailand and Vietnam”.

Although it recommends giving priority to Sub-Saharan Africa, the report makes no operational recommendations regarding the establishment of regional markets and the protection of vulnerable local production. It limits itself to discussing the advantages to consumers of imports of cheap tax-free basic commodities and compensation for the losers. The report seems to favour short-term consumer satisfaction, even considering that “smallholders are net food buyers” rather than attempting to encourage a process of price growth for local produce, generating a process of growth of agricultural processing industries.

Regarding the markets too, the reference seems to be that of emerging countries which have and manage large internal markets such as Brazil and India. The issue of a fragmentation of Sub-Saharan Africa and the smallness of national markets is not discussed, although it constitutes one of the main causes of the weakness of internal markets.

In the same way, the report does not discuss measures which would allow the consequences of price fluctuations and direct exports to be softened for small producers in liberalised markets.

However, this question of the organisation and management of markets is central to agricultural development and especially small scale agriculture. It should however be tackled in a practical and realistic way, without any preconceived ideological ideas, by the various interested parties.

- The issue of agriculture population and rural employment

The report discusses the need for reducing the agricultural population for transforming countries. The analysis emphasises the problems of reductions in the size of farms and the weakness in the growth rate of agricultural employment. However, the rural population of transforming countries still represents 60% of the total population of these countries i.e. 2.2 billion people or a third of humanity. This population remains poor or in extreme poverty and does not benefit from the exceptional growth of which the other 40% of the population benefits, the urbanised middle classes especially.

An improvement in agriculture requires an increase in the average size of farms. Urban economic growth can only lead to an acceleration of the rural exodus. As a result of this, assistance in this demographical change is a priority for public policies and governments. The report recommends “making massive investments in skills for this generation and the next” and promoting “a dynamic rural non-farm sector in secondary towns”. These intentions can only be approved. It is illusory to prescribe a standard way of territorial distribution especially when this comes from Western countries where the agricultural sector no longer makes up more than 3% of the population. But the balance will be difficult to guarantee and social cohesion will demand exceptional efforts.

- The environmental issue

This subject in fact covers several distinct fields even if they are all concerned with links between agriculture and the natural environment. They include:

- Sustainable agriculture, i.e. a system of production which uses natural resources sparingly.
- Agricultural environmental services, the environmental management function fulfilled by farmers for which the market can only pay in part.
- The consequences of climate change for agriculture, i.e. changes in the climate requiring changes in agricultural practices.
- Finally, the issue of bio-fuels and more widely biomass.

The need to encourage agricultural activities which are exemplary from an environmental point of view are a compulsory part of any discussions on the future of agriculture. The report, as it should do, discusses several ways forward in this direction – incentive policies, the dissemination of good practices and technological innovation. Rightly, the report does not exclude resorting to GMOs among the innovations useful to sustainable agriculture.

There remains the fact that the compatibility between the required productivity gains for satisfying needs and farmers’ incomes with the conservation of the environment is not truly analysed. It is true that this is an issue for all development participants and that none of them have for the time-being, provided a convincing response.

In summary, the World Bank report has the great merit of refocusing discussions on agricultural development and placing it at the forefront of international official bodies. These diagnoses and the directions it explores coincide with many of the ideas supported for many years by French participants in the field. It does not resolve some difficult issues nor does it remove contradictions whose resolution would help to improve policy coherence. It is important to support these points by strengthening the partnership with the governing bodies of the World Bank.

③ International negotiations and reforms of agricultural policies

The context is also marked by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations, the reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), American policy (Farm Bill) as well as bilateral agreements and especially the Economic Partnership Agreements between the European Union and the countries of Africa the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The period between 2008 and 2013 will be decisive. The negotiations should determine the new trade rules and the principles for defining agricultural policies. 2013 is the date for the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy and the implementation date planned for many of the World Trade Organisation's provisions.

The approach which guides these various processes is that of trade liberalisation, the removal of obstacles to trade and a reduction in public support which leads to distortions in the market.

The hypothesis underlying these developments is that the increase in trade leads to wealth creation and a fairer distribution of income in favour of developing countries and therefore improves the well-being of the poorest people.

3.1. The Doha round

The World Trade Organisation negotiations thus focused on three key points:

- A reduction in subsidies to farmers or internal support mechanisms leading to distortions in the market especially in the United States and in Europe;
- Access to the market of the developed countries for the produce of developing countries;
- The removal of grants for exports.

The principle of a new round of negotiations was decided at the fourth ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation at Doha in November 2001. The Doha declaration states that "International trade can play a major role in the promotion of economic development and the alleviation of poverty". Moreover the declaration recognises "the particular vulnerability of the least-developed countries" and declares its commitment to addressing this marginalisation. Furthermore, the declaration adds "We strongly reaffirm our commitment to the objective of sustainable development, as stated in the Preamble to the Marrakech Agreement".

Negotiations are taking place within the context of the trade negotiations committee. The original mandate was refined during meetings at Cancun (2003), Geneva (2004) and Hong Kong (2005). The first deadline of 1st January 2005, then that of the end of 2006 for the end of the negotiations were not met, especially because of disagreement over agriculture-related issues.

Negotiations over agriculture are chaired by the Ambassador Crawford Falconer who proposed to the member States an agreement proposal in August 2007 supplemented by 16 working documents on access to markets, internal support and export competition.

The discussions are highly technical and can only really be understood by experts following the negotiations. However, the main challenges are the reduction of internal support, especially American, leading to a distortion and the opening up of the markets of emerging countries to the industrial products and services of the developed countries. From this point of view, in terms of reciprocity, the question posed by the developed countries is to know if the opening up of new markets is sufficient for them to accept lowering internal support mechanisms. This is above all the argument of the United States.

In fact, it seems surprising that the negotiators, on this issue, underestimate the reality of the developed countries. These are faced with two constraints. First, the inexorable fall of food prices to consumers which goes hand in hand with the fight against inflation, the development of mass retailing and the evolution of consumer habits. Next, the place farmers hold in society, even if they no longer represent more than 3% of the population,

by the contribution to the history and identity of their respective nations and their territorial distribution.

Their place in society and the political influence it carries with it requires maintaining farmers in the part they play in social cohesion and is an impetus to the maintenance of financial support which guarantees this.

Moreover, the increase in the environmental functions that the market does not pay for, requires public action even if agricultural practices do not yet prove that they have changed to ecological ones.

However, above all, the essential question is to know who will benefit from deregulation. The models show that the poorest countries which remain predominantly agricultural will benefit little from these measures. The main beneficiaries will be the large emerging countries and in these countries, agriculture for export which is the most often industrialised. In fact, the new rules should above all benefit consumers and in part tax-payers.

On the other hand, the risk of scarcity now hanging over agricultural produce should encourage the logic of this to be reviewed. A rise in farmers' income in the least advanced countries does not mean a fall in farmers' income in the developed countries. An improvement in access to the markets for farms in developing countries is justified and is a measure of fairness. However, this does not solely concern international trade, but also internal markets, notably those of regional blocs. Moreover, the market by itself will not ensure the investment which will guarantee long term production capacity and enable a change to environmentally oriented agriculture. Public policies and support remain indispensable.

It is not at all sure that the WTO negotiators will review the basic principles of the negotiations. In this event, agreement will probably only be reached through compromises and bargaining which may leave everyone dissatisfied. All the more so as the use of support for development in line with the provisions to be decided on is far from being assured as the World Trade Organisation itself does not control these means which remain programmed by the aid agencies according to their own schedules and procedures.

3.2. Economic Partnership Agreements

At the same time, the economic trading blocs are drawing up regional agreements. The European Union is faced with finalising economic partnership agreements between the European Union and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. These provisions are the trading component of the Cotonou agreement which followed on from the Lomé agreement in 2000. These are free trade agreements in accordance with the current rules of the World Trade Organisation and bring to an end the preferential agreements of the Lomé agreement. However, the European Union has already granted access to its market without tariffs or quotas for most products from the least developed countries (LDC) by the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative.

The basic principles of the Economic Partnership Agreements consist in encouraging the ACP countries to set up regional groupings. six regional communities have been defined: West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific. These regional communities include non-LDC countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana or Cameroon. The agreements will allow these countries to benefit from the same access to the European market as LDC countries.

The agreements between developed countries and developing countries can include protection measures for the markets of the developing countries. They can be asymmetrical thanks to various provisions. The developing countries can notably define sensitive products and allocate customs duties to imports of these within certain limits. This is the Common External Tariff.

These possibilities are essential for those regions which are predominantly agricultural, in particular West Africa, Central Africa and East Africa.

The negotiation of Economic Partnership Agreements should be an opportunity for the ACP regions to set up large internal markets and offer new trade prospects for agricultural

sectors penalised by the fragmentation of Africa. These interior markets would enable a rebalancing of farmers' incomes to favour produce for local consumption by lessening their dependence on export products which do not benefit from any enhanced value locally.

EPAs should have been signed by the end of 2007, the expiry date of the dispensation for prolonging the preferential agreements granted by the WTO.

As of today, only the Caribbean region which numbers fifteen States has signed a regional agreement.

For the other regions, the European Commission has encouraged the non-LDC countries depending strongly on agricultural exports to Europe to sign interim bilateral agreements.

Twenty countries have signed these interim agreements, notably Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon.

West Africa, the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) is faced with agricultural issues. As the region is an importer of basic products the governments wish to limit tariffs on imports. The producers which have acquired political weight within civil society notably through the West African Farmer Organizations and Producers' Network (ROPPA), are asking for a raising of customs protection. In particular, they are asking for the most vulnerable agricultural produce to be protected by import tariffs of at least 50% although the region has accepted a ceiling of these tariffs at 20%.

Thus, once again the question of the regulation of agricultural markets is being posed. The time is historic for Sub-Saharan Africa. Yields of African agriculture are the lowest in the world. The high production capacities of the continent which are often in landlocked countries are not sought by the coastal cities which prefer to import produce. However, as it has been stated, the economic models demonstrate that liberalisation will not benefit the least developed countries nor the ACP countries and consequently will not benefit Sub-Saharan Africa. However Africa, along with Latin America, is one of the continents which has land which can be cultivated and has water resources.

Moreover, the ACP countries which are not LDCs (Least Developed Countries) are going to lose their preferential conditions of access to the European market. This in particular affects the agricultural countries which have managed to develop tropical produce.

The crisis strengthens the need to give priority to local produce and the internal markets. This priority also justifies protection measures for food produce as was discussed at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and massive investment in agriculture and the structuring of agricultural industries.

3.3. Reforms of the agricultural policies of the developed countries

The Common Agricultural Policy to which the most recent reform was made in 2003 will undergo a major change in 2013, the end of the term of the financing agreement chosen by the European Council. The revision of the CAP will begin in 2008 in view of the half-way study of the budgetary commitments. The European Commission is presenting "a health check" and is preparing proposals for 2013. France has placed the forward planning of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy among the priorities of the presidency of the European Union which it will have in the second half of 2008.

Apart from the overall budget of the European policy, the share out between States, in view of the new member States, between regions and between different types of agricultural production will surely be among the discussions. But three subjects above all will be central to the discussions: the reduction in internal support and separating them from production volumes, measures which encourage a more environmentally friendly agriculture and health and environmental standards.

Separating and reducing direct subsidies will leave producers directly open to the markets and their fluctuations. Consequently the mitigation of price volatility by managing the risks and the organisation of the markets is becoming a major issue. This is one problem that the European sectors will share with those of developing countries which have been faced with these difficulties at each reform towards deregulation.

Moreover, health and environmental standards will be strengthened. They will be applied both to European and imported produce in the name of consumer safety and the fight against climate change. They will constitute the new protective measures. Consequently, respecting the standards will become a major challenge for developing countries. The opening up of the European market without this being accompanied at the same time by financing and access to technology in favour of the sectors of developing countries would quickly be shown to be a deception.

In the United States, the American administration and Congress have not managed to reach agreement over the final form of the future agriculture bill. Indeed, the multiple-year agriculture law currently applied, the Farm Bill, Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (FSRIA) passed on 15th May 2002 for a six year period expired on 30th September 2007. This expiry date has been regularly deferred to allow the American Congress and the administration to reach an agreement.

The problems in finalising an agreement stem from the overall budget total estimated at 6,597 billion dollars over 10 years that Congress wishes to increase by 10 billion dollars (1.7%). These problems also show up the differing points of view in regard to agriculture. The Agricultural Commissions of the Congress influenced by the agricultural lobbies wish to maintain high internal subsidies. On the other hand, the American administration is seeking to limit the overall budget and also put a ceiling on support and respect more closely the rules of the World Trade Organisation. Over and above the usual test of strength between the heads of the executive and the legislature, this lack of movement shows the problems the developed countries have in complying with the aims of the World Trade Organisation. The Farm Bill, in any case, will maintain high internal support which will not make agreement within the framework of the Doha round any easier.

④ The new philanthropy

The action of charity organisations in development is not new. However the arrival of the Bill & Melinda Gates' foundation changes the landscape. Traditionally, American foundations, such as the Rockefeller or Ford foundations were involved in supporting research, the transfer of technologies and certain targeted activities. The Bill & Melinda Gates' foundation has a global objective of a green revolution for Africa and is allocating important means to achieving this.

The Alliance for Green Revolution for Africa whose board chairman is Kofi Annan promotes African agricultural priorities.

From an operational point of view, AGRA is directed by Dr Namanga Ngongi, former deputy executive director of the World Food Programme of the United Nations.

“AGRA advocates for policies that support its work across all key aspects of the African agricultural “value chain” –from seeds, soil health, and water to markets and agricultural education” (AGRA site).

AGRA has launched a programme for the training of crop scientists and seed dissemination. This programme is being carried out in partnership with the Rockefeller foundation. The Bill & Melinda Gates foundation is providing 100 million dollars of funding and the Rockefeller foundation 50 million dollars over 5 years. Two components have been launched. The first concerns southern and eastern Africa. An agreement has been made with the Peter Mants university in Kwazulu Natal for 8 students a year for 6 years i.e. the training of 48 students by the end of the programme. An equivalent project has been implemented with the universities of Ghana for western and central Africa.

Further upstream, the programme will support master's degree training programmes in universities identified in Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique and Kenya. To the west in Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso.

The founding of seed companies responsible for producing and distributing seeds. Support will concern skills and investment.

The second AGRA programme concerns the fertility of soils in Africa which granted 180 million dollars on 25th January 2008, with the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation providing 164.5 million dollars and 15 million dollars coming from the Rockefeller foundation.

The soil fertility programme will disseminate integrated management of soil fertility. This involves combining fertilizers, organic matter and crop systems to improve the productivity of the soils and preserve the environment.

The Alliance for the Green Revolution plans to launch an initiative for water management and in 2009 an initiative for agricultural markets.

At Davos in January 2008, Bill Gates announced that the foundation which bears his name will devote 306 million dollars to the agricultural sector in African and in Asia. Apart from the seed, soil fertility and training programmes, the financing will support some projects led by other operators.

For his part, the financier George Soros is giving 50 million dollars to the poorest villages, “the Millenium Villages” programme for projects in health, education and agriculture.

Official Development Aid came to around 100 billion dollars in 2006. The 4% devoted to agriculture represents therefore around 4 billion dollars.

The FAO's budget comes to 868 million dollars for the 2008-2009 financial years or 440 million dollars per year. This demonstrates the extent to which foundations are large donors for agricultural support.

By choosing to concentrate on producing a green revolution for Africa and access to seeds and fertilizers, the foundation is adopting a classic approach. The situation shows that an increase in African agricultural productivity is a priority. That said, the Bill Gates foundation intends to extend its operations to training and to the market.

⑤ Environmental demands

Awareness of the need to preserve natural resources has recently widened to include the whole of public opinion and decision-makers. Agriculture until now criticised for creating local pollution, is increasingly concerned by the effects of climate change and its role with regard to biodiversity.

The relationship of agriculture to environmental questions is ambivalent. On the one hand, farming is the source of some environmental damage. On the other hand, farmers manage natural resources and can therefore ensure their long-term preservation. Furthermore, changes to the environment modify agricultural practices and if sometimes these changes are positive, there is a risk of them becoming insurmountable, e.g. drought in tropical regions. Today, the problem is that society's environmental demands could well be increasing more quickly than agriculture's ability to adapt.

5.1. Climate change

The issue which brings together worldwide commitments is that of the fight against climate change. The rising of temperatures and its consequences has come to be viewed as a major risk, even if the responsibility of human activity remains controversial including among scientists. The United Nations framework agreement over climate change came into force on 21st March 1994. The Kyoto protocol, the operating treaty which resulted from this, ratified by 172 countries with the exception of the United States has been applicable since February 2005. It sets the objective of an overall reduction of carbon-dioxide emissions at 5.12% by 2012 compared with 1990 emissions. This is the first reorientation stage and what is at stake are the post-2012 objectives.

Moreover, the United Nations conference on climate change which met in Bali from 3rd to 14th December 2007 launched the post-Kyoto negotiations. This movement was strengthened by the 2007 Nobel prize and the Stern report. The 2007 Nobel Peace prize was awarded jointly to the former American vice-president Al Gore and to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The Stern report was ordered by Gordon Brown then Chancellor of the Exchequer from Sir Nicholas Stern, made Lord Stern of Brentford in December 2007, economist and former vice-president of the World Bank from 2000 to 2003. Published on 30th October 2006, the Stern report analyses the effect of climate change on the economy, society and politics. If we do nothing to halt global warming, we risk a collapse of 20% of the economy. Conversely, if we invest 1% of Gross Domestic Product as of now, not only can we lessen the negative effects of global warming but also create new economy.

Through the strength of its economic reasoning and its impact on governments, the Stern report will influence the design of public policy for several years to come. It is henceforth an international reference.

Moreover, although the consequences of this warming of the planet remained remote and often assessed on a time scale of 2050, the report introduces the notion of urgency. This shortening of the time scale can be added to local observations which strengthen the impact on agricultural activity.

Agriculture is concerned in several ways. Firstly, farming is the source of a large fraction, nearly a third, of greenhouse gases of which 14% come from agriculture and 18% from deforestation. Agriculture is the source of the main part of greenhouse gases "excluding CO₂" i.e. two-thirds of methane and nitrous oxide, coming notably from livestock farming and the use of fertilizers.

The second aspect concerns the impact of global warming. Agriculture, especially that of tropical and equatorial countries may be the first victim of the rising of temperatures and the decrease in rainfall.

On the other hand, agricultural activity can contribute to fixing and storing carbon. Forestry plantations, agroforestry, the use of plant cover and legumes and natural meadows can store carbon and reduce agricultural emissions of greenhouse gases.

5.2. Biodiversity

The preservation of biodiversity is equally of increasing concern to citizens. The awarding of the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2004 to Mrs. Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan ecological activist and the first African woman to receive this prize was confirmation of the worldwide attention given to the issue of biodiversity.

Since the international scientific conference on biodiversity convened in Paris in January 2005, an international movement was launched with the aim of creating an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB) following the example of the IPCC.

Biodiversity defines the diversity of all forms of life, i.e. the totality of genes, species and ecosystems. As far as ecosystems are concerned, the assessment report on the world's ecosystems for the millennium, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment ordered by the secretary general of the United Nations in 2000 was published in May 2005.

The report recalls the services provided by ecosystems such as the regulation and purification of air and water, the regulation of climates and the fertility of soils and indicates that 60% of the services provided by ecosystems are degraded or overexploited.

Agriculture is accused of being the source of some human activities which are the most destructive of biodiversity, firstly by deforestation in developing countries as well as the reduction in natural habitats and chemical pollution. To this can be added the consequences of genetics and crop systems on the diversity of cultivated species.

In fact, farms also take part in the preservation of living resources as they provide long term management of them. Agroforestry systems, the maintenance of natural meadows, wet areas, the fauna and flora of soils and the preservation of varieties and local breeds are an integral part of farming activity. Farming practices come together in maintaining and in some situations restoring natural balances.

The legitimacy for farmers to have environmental responsibilities comes moreover largely from a strengthening of these roles. The challenge is to ensure a compatibility of these roles with production activities. This especially concerns agriculture in developing countries which is little intensified.

But the true challenge for these systems of production is that of the extension of cultivated areas and deforestation. This is why an increase in yields and therefore intensification remain the top urgent priority to protect living resources. This was the *raison d'être* of the United Nations agreement on the fight against desertification adopted at Paris on 17th June 1994 and which came into force after the 50th ratification in December 1996.

5.3. Local resources, water and soils

Farming activities have also been criticised for their impact on soil erosion, soil and water pollution and the amounts taken from water resources. The sensitivity of the developed countries toward certain extreme forms of a race for productivity has led them to being suspicious of any intensification.

However, intensive agriculture, especially European kinds of it, have led to important changes in practice which strongly limit chemical pollution. These effects have, for example, allowed a reduction in the quantity and strength of the chemical products used (less than 40% in France since 1999 excluding nitrogen based products). Similarly, the development of agricultural techniques of direct sowing under plant cover by extensive American agriculture in both North and South America has limited erosion and the loss of soil fertility.

Moreover, it is dangerous to impose blanket restrictions regarding the use of water by agriculture. Thus, Africa has water resources available which are not exploited. To limit the extension of cultivated surfaces, it is legitimate to set up irrigable areas.

The problems encountered by large irrigated surfaces which should be acknowledged have created distrust which has been extended to all types of irrigation. However, small scale irrigation or adapting low-lying ground offer many opportunities for small and medium-sized farms.

5.4. International public aid is giving priority to the environment.

Funding agencies and international bodies are increasingly conditioning their aid on environmental criteria. They have set up specialised institutions.

Thus, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established in 1990 and has been operational since 1992 for participating in the financing of projects which bring environmental benefits with them in developing and transforming countries. GEF brings together 160 countries. GEF is a temporary financial mechanism for climate change agreements and for the biodiversity agreement. In 2006, 32 donor countries allocated 3.13 billion dollars for the period 2006-2010. The Facility always intervenes in co-financing to support the external environmental parts of projects. It is active in five main fields – climate change, biodiversity, persistent organic pollutants, land degradation and international waters.

France established a French fund for the global environment in 1994 on the same model. The Fund benefited from 201 million euros from 1994 to 2006.

However, for the sake of preserving the environment, the developed countries are tempted to impose ecological priorities on farming practices for all the different types of the world's agriculture whatever their degree of intensification. However, where Latin America or Africa are concerned, the preservation of natural resources first requires an increase in productivity for the areas of land currently being farmed. The various forms intensification may take must be worked out depending on the specifics of each situation and their priorities.

⑥ The strengthening of civil society

For the last fifteen years, in parallel with the liberalisation policies of the sectors and privatisation of institutions, new participants in civil society have come to the fore, notably agricultural organisations and businesses.

6.1. Professional agricultural organisations

The creating and structuring of organisations bringing together the agricultural producers in the developing countries are a recent phenomenon of the last fifteen years. In fact, these organisations were created in reaction to the liberalisation policies which dismantled public institutions, weakened agricultural services and exposed the producers to international markets prices.

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) is made up of national organisations of smallholders. IFAP was founded in 1946 but previously it brought together members from the developed countries in particular. Currently it has 89 national member organisations from 68 countries in the world including 36 developing countries.

La Via Campesina, nearer to the anti-globalisation movements was founded in 1993. It has members from 56 Asian, African European and North and South American countries. La Via Campesina defends small-scale, family-based agriculture.

In Africa and notably in West Africa, in Senegal, in Burkina Faso or in Mali, the movement is a part of village farmers' associations which have gradually come together to create national federations. The West African Farmer Organizations and Producers' Network (ROPPA) has come to the fore over the last few years as a negotiator with political authorities.

Professional organisations according to sector have also been set up. The Association of African Cotton Producers, AProCA is the most structured of these. It was founded in December 2004 by the federation of the national unions of 13 cotton producing countries as a result of the cotton crisis and reforms to the cotton sectors.

Most of the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar have had similar movements. These organisations today possess a capacity to mobilise producers and participate in national, regional and international debates.

However, they still remain fragile. They do not have permanent means for running their organisations due to the economic weakness of their members and still depend on financing from external aid and NGOs. Their importance often depends on the recognition of their leaders and lacks permanent managers. They are, however, an unavoidable way in the recognition of the existence of grown-up agricultural professions.

6.2. Micro-finance and credit for agriculture

Agricultural banks find it difficult to develop in the countries of the Southern hemisphere and several initiatives have resulted in failure. The creation and growth of micro-finance have opened up a new way resulting from the needs and practices of very poor borrowers who do not have access to traditional banks.

The financing of agricultural production by micro-finance requires a specific approach and financial instruments. Only a few institutions have given priority to agriculture but their results show that micro-finance can be an efficient way of financing agriculture.

Micro-finance, first begun thirty years ago, has undergone great expansion in the last few years. It has increased by 36% a year since 2000. The Grameen Bank was officially founded in 1983 by the teacher Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh. The organisation and its founder were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. Today the Bank numbers 1,400 agencies serving 50,000 villages. India has developed Self Help Groups, groups of savers of less than 20 people, since 1992. The sector has been experiencing rapid growth for the last few years and 1 million Self Help Groups benefited from a bank credit in 2006.

According to a study from the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) programme supported by the World Bank, the African micro-finance institutions are growing strongly and many of them have been set up in the last few years.

In the French-speaking world, several institutions demonstrate a mutual approach and are firmly established in the agricultural sector in a similar way to the beginnings of the French *Crédit Agricole* bank. This is the case of the *Caisse d'Épargne* (Savings Bank) and the *Crédit Agricole Mutuelles* (CECAM) in Madagascar created in 1992 or the popular banks of Mali, *Kafo Jiginew* created in 1987. These bodies work closely with the agricultural organisations notably the rice producers in Madagascar or cotton producers in Mali.

Micro-finance institutions are working towards the structuring of farming society and the emergence of grassroot economic players. This movement may contribute to a redefinition of the roles between the public sector and the economic players.

6.3. The contribution of migrants to development

The financial transfers made by migrants to their countries of origin constitute an important source of income for developing countries. Recent changes are marked by the structuring of migrant communities and the change of family support to investment. This is what interests funding agencies and banking institutions. Moreover scientific research enables the dynamics of this to be better understood. It does not simply involve financial transfers but also the transfer of skills and investment choices.

The International Monetary Fund assessed the amount of the fund transfers from migrants at around 130 billion dollars for 2001 alone. This assessment would appear to be lower than the true figure. Transfers are therefore higher than public development aid which barely reaches 100 billion dollars a year.

This money firstly contributes to social needs, in particular education and health. This is not only reflected in help to families but also by the financing of collective facilities.

Above all, it is increasingly directed to investment in production activities. From this point of view, it constitutes both a form of access to credit and a risk insurance.

From this point of view also, access to economic information, the harnessing of managerial and technical skills and access to banks for financing are essential conditions for professionalising and enhancing this finance.

Thus France grants a tax advantage to transfers of migrants' funds for the creation of jobs and income. A "Co-development savings account" (CED) has been set up by the savings banks. It is used to finance agricultural, industrial or commercial projects. The report by Charles Milhaud shows that transfers by migrants living in France amount to 8 billion euros. Sixty percent of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa send money to their countries of origin. The banks should take part in this activity to contribute to the transfer of these funds electronically, improve assistance and gain access to tax exemptions. For their part, the micro-finance institutions offer points near to users.

6.4. Businesses and agricultural development

The priority given to social fields by the Millennium objectives and the withdrawal by the States has left the responsibility for the agro-food and agro-industrial sectors to private players. It is due to this that the dismantling of State-owned companies has transferred the main functions of supply and commercialisation to businesses and businessmen.

Moreover, urbanisation confers to retailers an increasingly greater role in access to internal markets. Funding agencies are targeting a part of their financing on these businesses which allow them to benefit from loans and to assess the economic viability of projects.

The dynamism of the private sector is one of the factors which distinguishes strongly growing countries, especially emerging countries from those which struggle to get involved in a productive investment cycle. For all that, a new category of businesses is developing. It begs specific questions about access to financing, the control of management and commercial relationships with more powerful groups.

The definition of agricultural policies and development activities must take into account these needs since these new players provide functions which are indispensable to an expansion of the markets.

Thus these players, professional or private, from civil society, work within the farming communities which they come from and are taking a part in building. They liaise with public authorities and take part in local democracy. They increasingly constitute economic powers. Development policies and agricultural policies must go further by including new measures to strengthen their responsibility and their effectiveness.

⑦ Questions for the future

The soaring cost of food and the subsequent riots have been telling. A break has occurred in a gradually downward trend of agricultural prices, global food security and generalised deregulation.

Even if prices are subject to new falls, one can think – and hope moreover – that new ways of conceiving agricultural policies and the place of agriculture in the economy and society will become generalised. All parties must contribute to devising and implementing these new approaches.

The questions which follow identify some major themes concerning future planning and strategic discussions.

- Reconsidering the reality of production potential and forecasts for worldwide agricultural balance.

Most forecasts relied on hypotheses of a particular price trend and technical progress.

Furthermore, they hypothesised that a fairly constant fraction of land use would be for non-food use mainly linked to materials such as cotton, rubber or wood. The demand for animal products and bio-fuels requires these hypotheses to be re-examined.

Above all, the influence of prices on implementing innovation becomes central. Which technologies are available and under which economic conditions will they be used?

- Rethinking production systems and the types of intensification

Thought must be given to the types of agriculture and their relationship to natural resources. The hierarchy of priorities needs to be rethought and types of intensification logically argued according to each farming situation. The analysis must allow the design of production systems and the way they evolve to be distinguished. The developed countries cannot impose an environmental priority which would consist of limiting the use of fertilisers and thereby curtailing yields to their current levels in each region of the world for reasons of short term environmental protection.

If such is not the case, a calculated assessment of potential increases in yields using the various technologies is indispensable. This assessment must take into account the various ways available without excluding any of them: improvements in traditional varieties, biotechnology and GMOs, agro-ecology, irrigation, recourse to chemical fertilisers.

These comparative assessments should allow clarity in the choices of agricultural policies and public aid, such as is the case in other industrial fields.

- Rethinking the design of farms and agricultural sectors

Agriculture in developing countries is marked by the priority given to family-run smallholdings as opposed to “agrobusinesses”. But the idea of family farms itself implies social norms of reference although societies are diverse and are undergoing profound change all over the world. Moreover, this concept may infer various attitudes with regard to investment, management and technological innovation. It is the idea of the head of the farm as a businessman and the farm as a business which are at stake.

The consequences which result from this are decisive for the conception of professional organisations, their capacity to act as economic players and participate in the structuring of sectors. A too restrictive definition of family-based agriculture may lead to an idea of a feeling of reluctance towards progress and the market.

Likewise, it is unjustified to reject, on principle, incentive policies aimed at attracting external financing towards agriculture. It is more constructive to ask the question case by case about the actual relationship between these investments and the existing family-run farms.

- Confronting the question of market regulation.

The objective which aims at allowing farmers to make a living from selling their produce cannot be achieved by the simple operation of the agricultural markets which are

structurally asymmetric and speculative. The closing of borders as a reaction to particular economic circumstances is not a long term response, neither is a compartmentalisation of independent regional blocs. The structuring of agricultural sectors, their role in the operation of the markets and provisions for covering risks are becoming essential.

The respective functions of the various economic participants must be rethought out, whether this be the international or regional rules, national policies or professional organisations.

- Setting up new relationships between the public institutions and private operators taking account of the centres of operational decisions and financial flows.

Agricultural development involves various categories of players some of which act as both funding agencies and prescribers.

The time is ripe for reconsidering the sharing out of responsibility between the States, external partners and professional organisations. Thought should be given to a delegation of responsibilities which are managed and controlled according to the rules of the private sector.

This involves in fact coming up with a systemic vision of assistance to agricultural development.

- Developing before-and-after impact studies.

The analysis of policies and support provisions should be developed to assess beforehand their expected effects. Likewise, determining impact indicators and monitoring them requires a methodological effort which is rarely agreed to.

- Renewing the idea of how a partnership is organised.

The existence of a great number of participants with different objectives implies that consultations are part of the planning, research and study work. New forms of dialogue and collective work are indispensable.

⑧ Prospects and incentives for FARM

The diagnosis and objectives which have motivated the founders of the foundation for agriculture and rural life in the world (FARM) from 2002 onwards have been confirmed by the new context. The inevitable role of agriculture in the fight against poverty, the risks associated with the lowering of investment in agriculture, the economic, social and environmental importance of agriculture for half of humanity are becoming once again shared concerns for all of society.

However, this does not mean going back to directed agricultural policies. A whole series of privatisations, administrative provisions and liberalisation of trade will not be challenged. However, this period saw the emergence and strengthening of civil society, farming organisations, businesses and NGOs. It is within this context that FARM's activity should be seen.

The foundation promotes a business-like vision of farming and supports the professional organisations through training. FARM is a place of study, thought, training and discussions (a "think-tank") about the operational issues of agriculture and the agro-food sectors.

The objective is to call upon the skills and means of businesses and professionals to help the producers in developing countries, notably those who have not yet benefited from the decisive results of intensification.

The new context must encourage FARM to reinforce its activities within the specific sphere of its approach: studies, experiments and proposals over issues which are decisive for the success of farmers undertaking development.

The studies aim to have the role of alerting, revealing and highlighting reality. They allow dispersed data to be brought together and diagnoses to be shared. The experimental projects and training respond to the needs of professional groups who wish to improve the performance of their activities.

Most of the countries where partners of FARM work are the victims of the food crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, in North Africa and in Madagascar. FARM is therefore called upon to increase its activity to assist local farmers and respond to their needs and to channel the investment required for the re-launch of agriculture.

Such an approach should lead especially to:

- Strengthening working with forward planning operations and strategic think tanks in order to better integrate the issue of developing countries into these analyses. In this respect, FARM must act in order to have the diversity of situations better taken into account.
- Favouring studies giving priority to the conditions of successful farming, agricultural production and the organisation of production. For example:
 - Studies on agricultural potential and the agricultural markets in the countries or regions concerned;
 - Studies on the repercussions of world prices on local prices for producers and the reaction of producers to this new context;
 - The monitoring of agricultural negotiations and especially the Economic Partnership Agreements between the European Union and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.
- Working to set up new operational relationships between the public sector, agricultural professionals and businesses. The re-launching of agricultural policies and the restoration of the role of States will be undertaken on new foundations to which FARM could contribute.
- Demonstrating through operational projects, the conditions for local increases in production and its marketing: access to fertilisers and the proper use of fertilisers.
- Strengthening partnerships with development players, especially the agencies of agricultural sectors.

The themes that FARM has launched, training for the management of sector heads, microfinance for agriculture, small and medium scale irrigation and new technologies for agriculture are part of these conditions for success and can be developed by strengthening their complementarity. They constitute a contribution that can be added to through access to production means and the market.

Overall, the objective is to attract public and private investment for the agriculture of developing countries and to enable farmers to have access to financing. FARM supports the conviction that this financing will be forthcoming if the professional players present strategic programmes, propose innovative methods and can prove an efficient use of these means. This is what FARM, within the limit of the means that the foundation can muster, can contribute.

⑨ Conclusion

The soaring of agricultural prices in the markets in the world markets and the hunger riots it has brought about have acted as detonators. These alarm calls have alerted public opinion and the political decision-makers to the risks of food shortages. In fact, they make up the most visible part of converging factors which lead to considering agricultural issues from a new angle. This is especially true of the 2008 development report published by the World Bank, reforms of agricultural policies and international negotiations. These events need to be added to the great increase in environmental demands and the arrival of new participants in the agricultural development of poor countries, in particular in Africa.

It is probable that this convergence of factors will mark a historic break in how agricultural policies are conceived, which corresponds to the end of a cycle of market liberalisation, the privatisation of agricultural services and especially a drastic cut in investment in agriculture, in public aid and the budgets of poor countries.

The conditions according to which adjustment policies have been implemented bear some responsibility in the situation which prevails today. New agricultural policies must be developed. They must take account of the privatisations which will not be disputed. But the functions of the States must be reconsidered by insisting on market regulation, the legitimate protection of local production, investment to encourage agriculture and infrastructure but also by establishing new contractual relationships between the players of civil society and public authorities.

The increase in agricultural prices opens up new horizons. It is not sure that prices will remain high and in any event rising agricultural prices do not exclude fluctuations in prices. Likewise, profitable markets do not eliminate competition. And it is the most vulnerable who are the first victims of volatility. It is to be hoped that awareness by the international community will not be a flash in the pan and that the promises in support of agriculture will be longer lasting than the emotion that the riots aroused.

This occasion must also be used advantageously to rethink our responsibilities with regard to the poorest countries in as far as the financing of agriculture is concerned, the intensification of production and the protection of local markets. Sub-Saharan Africa has land, water, a high agricultural population and now farming organisations. But it lacks the means to develop this potential. It is the responsibility of the developed countries, public aid and the private sector to use skills, methods and financing to help them to succeed in getting agriculture to make strides. This presupposes that we accept taking into account the diversity of the agricultural and economic situation. Africa has little intensive agriculture and still depends on imports. The priority is to obtain gains in productivity with methods available to feed their population. This intensification is a requirement for reasons that are just as much social as ecological.

The populations which have the greatest need for support are those who are burdened with the heaviest economic and ecological constraints. But they are also in countries where farmers are the most numerous. It is they who need help in achieving success.

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