

Food Security and Agricultural Strategies: What Room for Multilateral Governance?

A Momagri and Madariaga-College of Europe Conference,
in Cooperation with the Committee of the Regions

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PRESENTATION

Recent food riots, hyper-volatile agricultural prices and speculation on agricultural raw materials have reminded politicians that agriculture is not only a specific sector, but a strategic one.

Demographic growth forecasts for 2050 and the consecutive increase of world food needs, as well as the developments of green chemistry, reinforce the belief that agriculture is “green gold” and even, according to some commentators, the geopolitical weapon of the 21st century.

In less than 3 years, agriculture has returned to the forefront of the international scene, even leading to a call for a Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food (July 2008), and more recently figuring amongst the priorities of the G8/G20 2011 agenda.

The planet's first economic activity, which had fallen into oblivion notably to the benefit of new technologies, is today at a major crossroads for the future of humanity. It will either be at the origins of new virtuous forms of international economic cooperation towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, or it will strengthen extant tensions on natural resource markets, plunging the world into repetitive food, economic and political crises.

An analysis of the functioning of agricultural markets and of the impact of recent global developments helps grasping the prevailing role played by agriculture in the new global geo-economy, revealing the “great manoeuvres” at work by the different States in this strategic sector. Political declarations by Russian, American, Chinese and Brazilian authorities are growing in number to affirm the importance of agriculture for national security and for the economy.



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What are the objectives of the world's major powers' agricultural policies? What kinds of means are being implemented towards their achievement? What consequences do they have in terms of food security, environmental and geopolitical stability?

How far will international powers go to reinforce their agricultural production potential, decrease dependence on external sources for their food security, or use this sector as a vehicle for economic and political power?

Today's international context seems favourable to new initiatives for global regulation and supervision: What proposals are on the table for the regulation of physical and financial markets in raw materials? What concrete steps should be taken to answer the calls for global agricultural and food governance? In this regard, could the EU not play a leadership role?

These questions will be addressed **on 17 November 2010 at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels**, at a seminar organised by Momagri and the Madariaga – College of Europe Foundation, in cooperation with the Committee of the Regions.

This one-day event will seek to identify the agricultural strategies of the world's major States and continents (United States, China, the European Union, India, Russia, Brazil, Africa), their points of convergence and points of divergence. Lessons will be drawn for future equilibriums, be they in the agro-food sector, environmental, territorial, commercial and geo-political. The intention will be:

- **To better understand the consequences of the return of agriculture as a strategic challenge on the global scene.**
Between those who consider that agriculture has always been strategic and those who highlight its new features, the aim should be to better understand the consequences of this state of play in a globalised world, where problems of malnutrition and poverty remain very preoccupying.
- **To analyse the emergence of regulatory initiatives**
Whether of a political nature (export tariffs, the control or even ban of agricultural land purchasing) or of a financial nature (on the futures markets of agricultural raw materials), what impact will these measures have on the development of global agriculture and on farmers' activity?
- **To stress the opportunity for the EU to bring momentum to international cooperation in the agricultural and food sector, through the reform of the CAP.**
Should the EU not seize the opportunity of the process of CAP reform to advance international cooperation in agriculture as a means to address global food security matters? Would this challenge not provide an incentive to boost the EU's political dynamics?