Sustainable agri-food supply chains and systems

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WT35 short presentation (max 10 lines)

In order to govern globalization, countries need to reconcile natural resource management and concern for the environment with the need to have more growth and employment. This is particularly important in the case of food supply chain management, as environment pollution and climate change do threaten agriculture productivity.

The food industry is the leading manufacturing sector in Europe, in terms of turnover, value added, employment and number of companies. Besides strong environment challenges, the food sector must face very important changes related to demographics (ageing, migration) and also lifestyles. The change of diet habits (more calories, saturated fatty acids, less fibres) is responsible of increased diet-related diseases such as diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases etc…

Food production chains can be organised in a variety of ways. Conventional 'industrial' agricultural practices are based on advanced breeding techniques and major inputs of chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

Many argue that the industrialised systems should be dismantled and replaced with alternative methods of agriculture, food processing and distribution that emphasise social and environmental sustainability.

To face, in a pro-active way, these challenges, a re-design of the whole food supply chain is needed, to improve sustainability. It has to be understood if:

1. Could logistics represent a tool to modify, in a more sustainable way, the interactions between food production and food consumption?

2. Could a shorter food supply chain contribute to the creation of new, healthy and sustainable consumption patterns?

3. Could an improved knowledge about the relation between food and environment modify food consumption habits, towards the consumption of less processed food and changing the present food production trends (i.e. increasing production of functional food)?

4. Which role could (or must) have Public Authorities, who buy each day hundreds thousands of meals for school catering, in influencing the above mentioned choices?

This will be the start up of the dialogue of the 'Sustainable agri-food supply chains and systems' Workshop of this second China Europa Forum.