

WT35 – Sustainable agri-food supply chains and systems

Session 1

The Chinese vision

- The approach to the problem: Holistic approach to solve such a multidimensional question generated by the combination of Sustainable Development and Food Supply Chain concepts. Main topics are food safety, production systems, farmers income, pollution and environmental effects. Main sustainability dimensions are economical efficiency, social aspects, technological background, management.
- Food safety and quality: Government requirement is that 100% of food reaches high quality standards for both domestic and international markets. More than six ministeries involved (MOA, MOH, MOCT, SFDA, GAIC, AQSIQ, QS). Problems drivers: - market made of small companies -needs to define responsibilities of market actors (government, companies) -need for scientific approach to define standards, traditional methods unadequate for scientifically based standards but have proven in the past that they can be valuable ·unknown impact of new technologies (for instance Genetically Modified Organisms) -Harmonisation of international standards. Among all the models USA, Europe, what is the best for China ?
- Food nutritional Quality Poor nutritional quality have direct consequences on health and on working capacity therefore on economy (less work productivity,more health expenses). Problems drivers: -deteriorated soil quality together with intensified farming patterns -during food processing a part of nutrient quality is lost need to decide if to add nutrional components to food or to produce better nutritional quality food, -unknown impact of new technologies (for instance Genetically Modified Organisms) -limitation from low purchasing power
- Actions for communication and network: to inform and communicate towards: consumers, government policy makers, companies and producers to join international networks of funding for children health programs, social responsibility programs etc...)

The European questions addressed to Chinese

- Food security is only one component of the Sustainability
- Is the importance of food safety due to the necessity for China to enter international markets?
- What are the effects and tensions on rural development and jobs created by the process of concentration and evolution of food systems in China ?
- What are the effect of the use of the cereals and other agricultural products to produce energy?
- To solve food production, food safety and food sustainability problems takes time (Europe has been working for fifty year on such topics)
- European people have the responsibility to inform Chinese partners on various standards
- The power share in the food chains is one central matter; in particular way the relationships between small producers a big companies working in food processing and retail.
- It is important to include in food system management food culture and food diversity.
- The concentration of the production and processing does not solve the problems of complexity and lenght of the food chain.
- A peculiarity of Chinese food system seems to be have to face in the same time problems of hunger, mal- nutrition, obesity.
- These problems cannot be solved only by technical means but need policy, social, cultural approach.

WT35 – Sustainable agri-food supply chains and systems Session 2

The European vision

- Sustainability basic rules: -To reach balance between economic, ethics and environmental pillars. -Conservation of biological diversity. -Equitable beneficiary sharing (incl. use of resources). -Respect of earth carrying capacity (footprint concept)
- Unsustainability problems: European food systems are highly dependant on non renewable energy and unsustainable grown feed they are not producing. Biodiversity has declined in relation with the industrialisation of farming and the homogeneisation of production and consumption patterns. Policy does not put at the same level social and environmental dimension are not at the same level than economical pillar.
- food quantity : solved with PAC policy in Europe but still health and safety problems.
- food safety: a major component of sustainability to start with. Big progress have been made but new problem still arise because of the complexity of European food production system.
- food quality: 1- malnutrition is due to food quality problems and wrong diet. 2- necessity to adapt food to the different consumers. 3- necessity to use high quality products (certification of origin, possible short-cut between local – typical food). 4- Public catering is a strong lever to change food habits in Europe. 5- Ethical environmental certifications are not the solution but still a powerful tool to improve the present situation.
- Food Chain : today it is extremely long and therefore difficult to manage;
- Social factors : in the same time there is an increase of interest for agricultural matter (students) and decrease of rural population. Tendence to the concentration of producers low salaries. Money spent to recover ghost villages
- Communication: 1-necessity to understand who are the different consumers; sustainability is a more and more relevant issue for european consumers. 2-information campaigns (for instance to increase fruit and vegetable consumption). 3-Food labeling issue : besides traceability problems, consumers need to know the origin of the products. They are also concerned by CO2 questions. 4- advertising issue: sustainability is not an issue for advertising campaign. Sustainability may be promoted by education. 5- concertation approach between all stakeholders: policy makers, industry, consumers, unions, etc...

- Decision making : 1- to establish partnership between European Union decision makers and industry and also all along the chain from the farm to the fork, according to the principle of the share responsibility of all the actors. 2- to encourage green public procurement and the logic of “Economical most advantageous offer” instead of the logic of lower price.
- Environmental factors: are water, soil, biodiversity, energy The models of farm production, food processing and logistics must become more sustainable. Worldwide challenge of sea food products where situation is even worse (limited fish, environmental degradation) .
- Open questions : 1-People give many meanings for sustainability: we must define common priorities around the basic rules of Sustainability. 2- need for efficient european policy: more flexible (in function of local situations) and holistic. 3- the identification of the problems must be followed by the definition of research programs and by innovation. 4- necessity of multidimensional solutions and of the participation of numerous actors. 5- besides general policies, markets must be developed and encouraged at the very local level. 6- It is important to learn from past history and also from errors. 7-every country – production centre- needs to optimize its own production size in function of its own situation. 8- To convince stakeholders that sustainability is convenient.

The Chinese questions addressed to Europeans

- Concern for the protection of small producers in China
- Why food trade is more developed with Asian market than with European market?
- Why more big food accidents have occurred in Europe than in USA?

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Session 3

Similarities

- “SMALL PRODUCERS AND COMPANIES : In China and in Europe there is a LARGE NUMBER OF SMALL COMPANIES working within the food chain production system.
- FOOD SAFETY AND SECURITY: NECESSITY TO INCLUDE DOCTORS IN THE DEBATE ABOUT FOOD MANAGEMENT. In many cases this has already been successfully implemented. The question of obesity: difficulties to have children consuming fruit and vegetables. It is possible to work on FOOD EDUCATION programs, or on vegetable recipes.
- PUBLIC POLICY MAKING-ROLE:Public Authorities at local, national and inter-governmental level have an important role to play in CATALYSING MOVEMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SYSTEMS. In Europe, public policy is driving sectors of the business community to take the sustainability criteria into account.
- “LACK OR OVERABUNDANCE OF INTERPRETATIONS ABOUT WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY. : Sustainability is a global multi-factor matter: it is very easy to disagree on partial elements of sustainability and to loose time in endless discussions. Need for a definition of priorities and objectives: Objectives ==> Values ==> Package (product+message) ==> trust of consumers
- SUSTAINABILITY FRONT RUNNERS :Sustainable development offers numerous business opportunities: -new green technologies (RESEARCH INNOVATION), -CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM. There is not a single path to follow but the need of a dense collaboration between all front runners everywhere in the world.
- COMMUNICATION : All participants agree that there is a strong work to do in order to modify unhealthy consumers habits. -to contrast the power of advertising for junk-food. -to develop project for education to sustainable consumption. -to define the role of mass-media in the discussion. -to do a very accurate classification of the consumers based not only on cultural data but also on economical data.
- RULES, LAWS STANDARDS AND SUSTAINABILITY: International and European policy and rules must be considered as a system under construction. We cannot limit our action to the blind application of actual rules to face the sustainability challenge. ACTUAL RULES AND PRICE SIGNALS MAY KEEP PLAYERS IN UNSUSTAINABLE PATHS BEYOND EARTH CARYING

- CAPACITY. Actual price is not fair as external cost such social and environmental costs are not covered.

Differences

- PRODUCTION SYSTEMS (CATERING) ARE ORGANISED DIFFERENTLY
- COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN FOOD TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS? Chinese participants demonstrate a high confidence in the definition of standards to facilitate the trade of food products. The answer of European participants is that beyond standards, sustainability is also based on shared values. Trust is an important element of sustainable food trade. Corporate Social Responsibility can be a starting point to increase trust.

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Session 4

How to enhance the dialogue between China and Europe ?

- TO CREATE A WORLD ALLIANCE OF FRONT RUNNERS
- PILLAR: IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CHINA ON FOOD SYSTEMS AND SUPPLY CHAIN
- A PUBLIC FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM : 1-Study on “healthy food in Chinese school canteens”. 2-Chinese learning journey in Italy, France. 3-link with European networks AlimenTerra and Food for Life. 4-link with Latin American initiatives
- B- SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS PROGRAM : 1-Study and research experience with China IDR. 2-lab in China 7-17 April 2008 together with USA delegation. 3-Initiative Forum in China. 4-Web site of the EU China Forum initiative
- C- SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES PROGRAM : 1-initiative with the Alliance for Responsible fishery (NGO) to face the question of illegal fishery