



KEY ISSUES

in the **Development**
of **Agriculture,**
Food systems
and **International**
Cooperation:
Scenarios for the
Next Forty Years

Background

Between December 2019 and March 2020¹, SOS Faim Belgium undertook a brainstorming exercise, with the support of the Destrée Institute, to draw up scenarios for the next forty years (to 2060) for the development of agriculture and food systems and the role to be played by international cooperation.

This creative endeavour combined data collection with lots of discussion and debate, in which the team from SOS Faim was joined by representatives of other stakeholders - including donors, NGOs and private sector businesses.

The Destrée Institute suggested a eight-stage approach:

- Reflect and prepare
- Build scenarios, combining collective brainstorming with data analysis;
- Identify long-term issues arising;
- Construct a vision of the ideal future;
- Define strategic axes;
- Specify concrete actions to be taken;
- Undertake a pilot and evaluate the results;
- Finally, evaluate process and results.

Stages 1 to 4 were covered in a series of four workshops which made a significant contribution to the debate on strategy at SOS Faim Belgium.

¹ The exercise thus took place before the COVID-19 health crisis. The scenarios would not necessarily have been changed by the pandemic. Indeed, we may now see them sooner.

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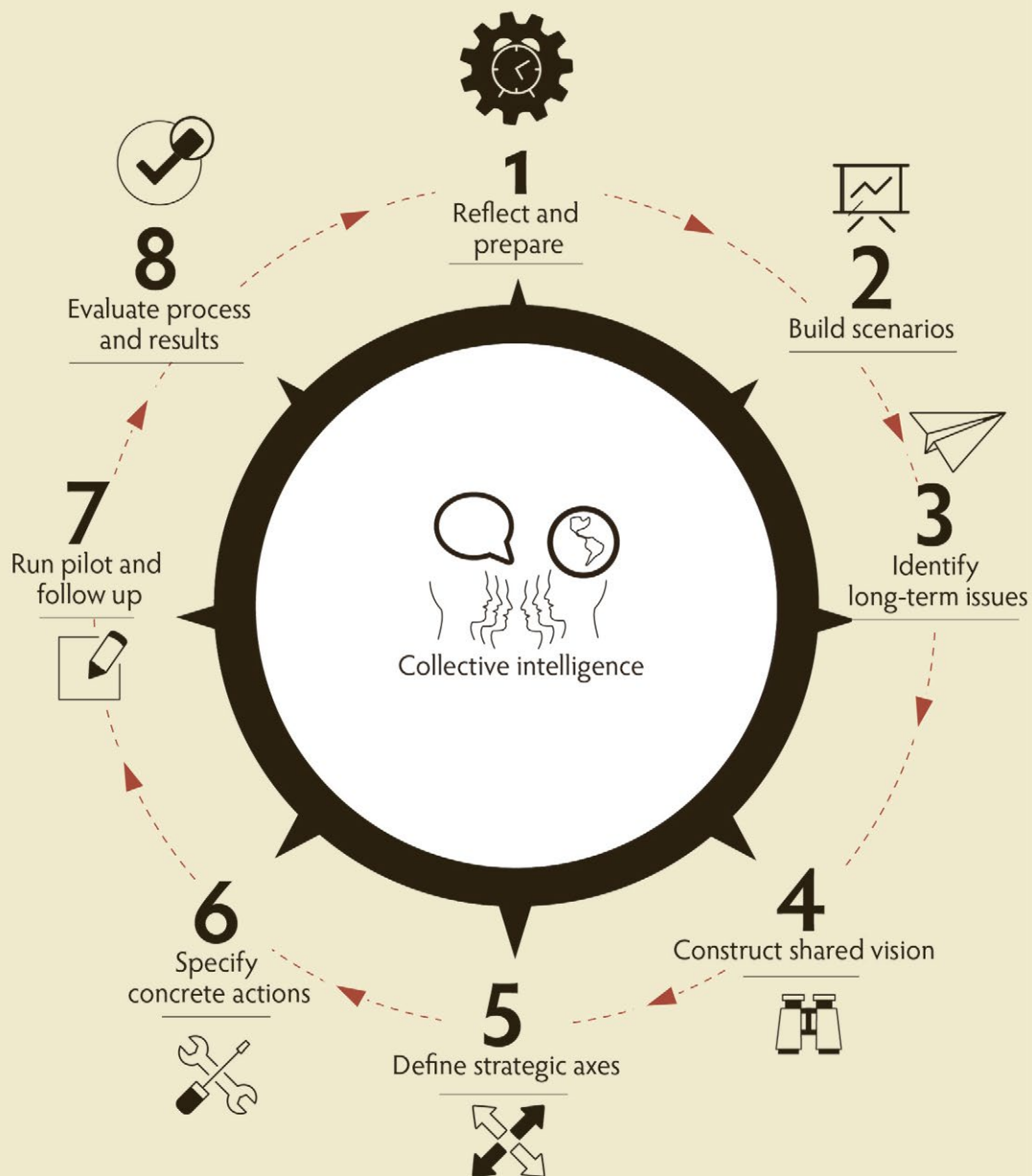
This is a summary, written by Marc Mees, of the Destrée Institute report *Partage d'enjeux de long terme et de visions des mutations de l'agriculture, des systèmes alimentaires et rôles de la coopération internationale* (Key issues in the development of agriculture, food systems and international cooperation), by Pascale van Doren and Philippe Destatte.

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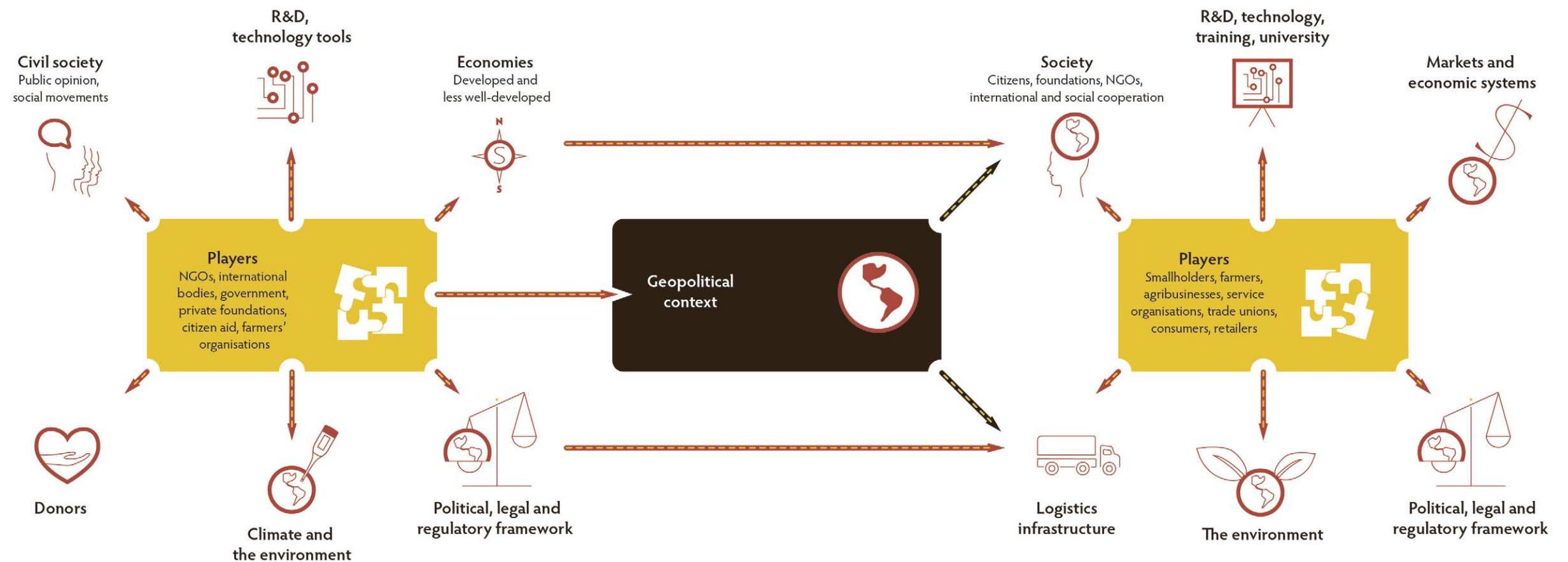
Brainstorming process



1) Brainstorming

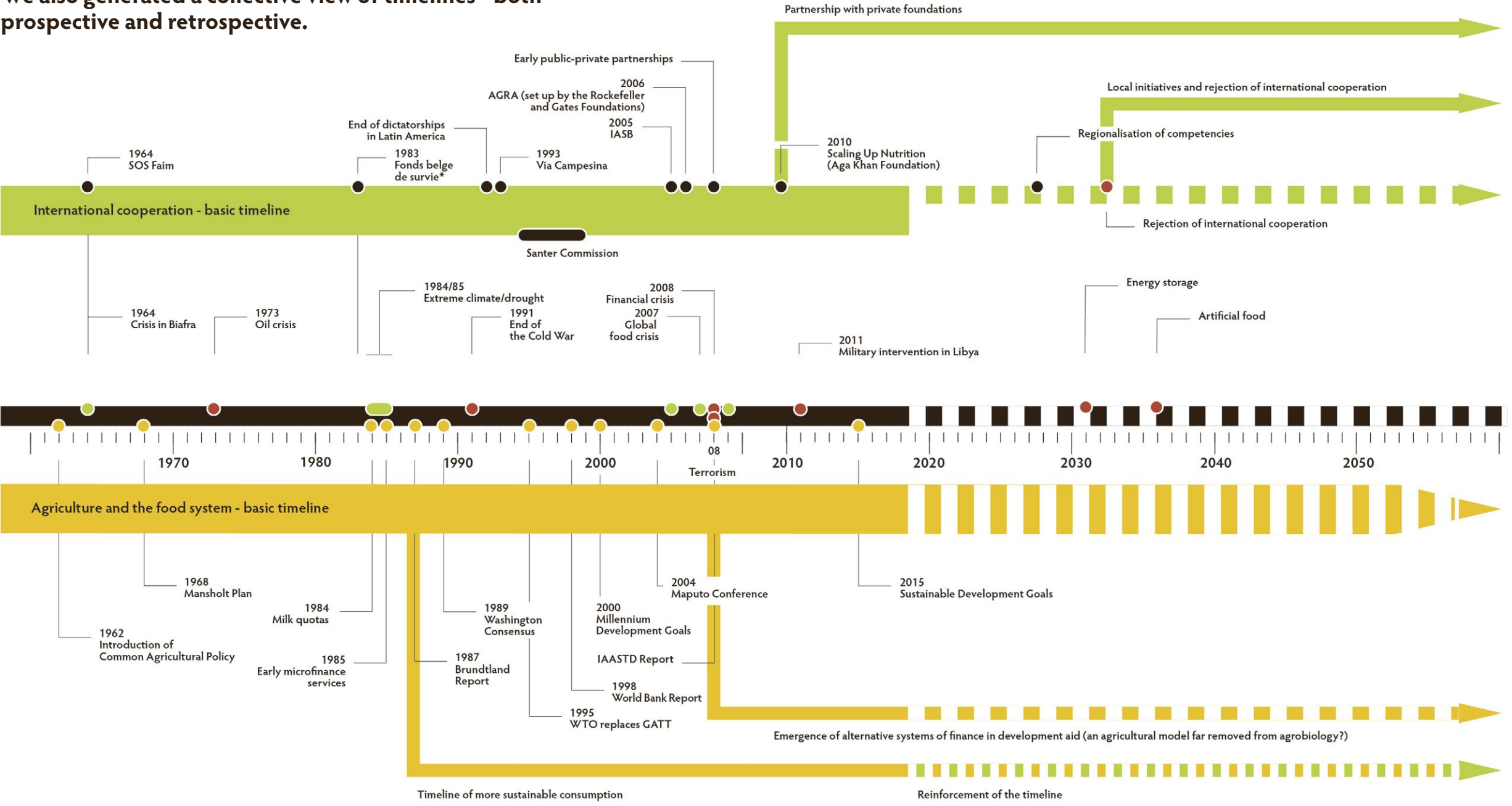
We considered two ecosystems - global agriculture and the food system, and international cooperation - and examined the links between the players in each.

International cooperation and links between the players in global agriculture and the food system



Timelines

We also generated a collective view of timelines - both prospective and retrospective.



*: A Belgian government initiative to increase food security in Sub-Saharan Africa

2 The Compass of the Future

In the course of our discussions and analysis we identified key development factors and positioned them on two structural axes - an axis of transition towards sustainable development and resilience to climate change, and an axis which we called "atomisation" with ethical collectivism (cooperation, partnership) at one end and corporatism (competition) at the other.

Agriculture and the Food System: International Cooperation Compass



The scenarios developed in the workshops were based around the four quadrants of this compass. In each workshop we considered five issues common to them all:

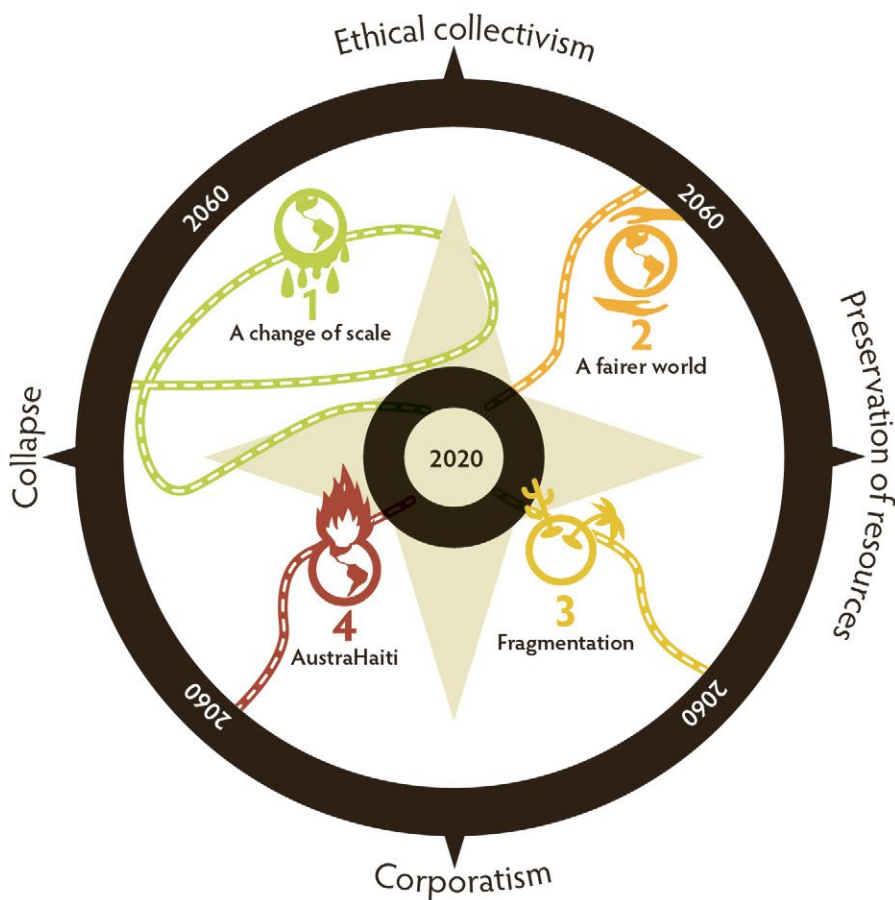
- Production methods
- Governance and security
- Fairness and social cohesion
- Trade and commerce
- The emergence of new players.

3

The four scenarios

Agriculture and the Food System

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION SCENARIOS 2020-2060





SCENARIO 1

A change of scale

Inertia rules as the world falls apart. Although some preventative measures are taken, the response is too late.

Extreme climate events become more frequent, natural resources are depleted, and biodiversity is lost at an ever-faster rate. Water becomes a commodity, to be bought and sold. The economy slows down. There is less trade.

As tensions mount, international cooperation is no longer a priority - neither for governments, nor for the general public. Donations to NGOs dry up.

A critical point is reached in 2035. There are numerous shortages. Isolationism prevails. Grave social problems abound. Systematic speculation in basic necessities is rife.

Pandemics become more frequent. Insecurity is commonplace. Violence is widespread.

Ten years later, the old order in ruins, local collaborative initiatives slowly start to reappear.

The 2050s see the emergence of a new form of cooperation between neighbouring territories.

Diversified polyculture and the use of agroecological methods become more common. Supply chains are very short. People eat local produce. There is a revival of nomadic pastoralism in the poorest areas.

New players take the stage - local leaders with charisma in abundance.

But is there an alternative? In this other version of events popular protests in the most developed countries in the 2030s force the adoption of a very different model. Politics overrules economics. Agroecology becomes the new normal. There is a world government made up of a network of big regional councils. Solidarity is the name of the game.





SCENARIO 2

A fairer world

In 2060 sustainable family farming is feeding the entire population of the world whilst providing smallholders with a decent standard of living.

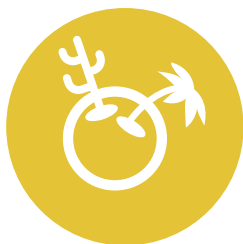
Farmers have been empowered. No longer do they simply produce raw materials for sale at rock bottom prices. In this food system consumers also have a decent income with which to buy quality foodstuffs. Prices reflect external negativities (a carbon tax, for example).

Getting to this point has involved the deliberate introduction of policies to stimulate the growth of sustainable methods of alternative agriculture. A green approach is recognised to be in the common interest. Lots of companies adjust to the requirements of the social economy.

The United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are all reformed under pressure from the governments which finance them. OECD countries spend more on development cooperation, increasing their support for sustainable family farming.

International NGOs play a key role in this transition, raising awareness globally of the need to move to a new order, and helping locals in the developing world to set up new food systems. Over time all of the big private foundations endorse the new policies.





SCENARIO 3

Fragmentation

COP50 is a failure. Cyberterrorism increases. Isolationism is universal. Nation states take on new shapes, with the location of clusters of population reflecting the availability of natural resources like forests, rivers, seaboards and so on.

These clusters invest in sustainable agriculture and alternative energy to put an end to the use of fossils fuels.

Agriculture is biointensive, maximising the yield whilst minimising the use of natural resources by growing a wide range of produce with high nutritional value. Supply chains are short.

As for governance, two hypotheses are possible. Either resources, technologies and the local economy are controlled by oligarchies, with the result that some groups are marginalised, the elite prosper and social inequality grows. Or power resides with the state so the private sector is small and there is an emphasis on equitable access to resources.

In neither case is there much interaction between different clusters. Rather, there is growing inequality, worldwide, between those which achieve self-sufficiency and those which lack the natural resources required. With no internet there is little exchange of information and with fossil fuels exhausted few journeys are made. There is little reason to want to move from one cluster to another, so isolationism increases.

Cooperation is largely confined to local exchanges aimed at evening out access to resources. International organisations lose credibility, and nation states withdraw from them. Conflict between clusters is commonplace.





SCENARIO 4

AustraHaiti

As the name suggests, this scenario is inspired by recent events in Australia and Haiti.

Natural resources near exhaustion, prompting fighting over those that remain. Biodiversity suffers. Natural disasters become more frequent.

Corporatist society collapses as a result. The state disappears. Local communities pick up the baton - some democratic, some dictatorial and some spiritual. They develop new forms of government to ensure that they survive, resorting to the use of force to defend themselves if necessary. There is a revival in shamanism and in the use of traditional medicines.

Communities do not collaborate, but fight over resources. Insecurity grows. Violence increases. Arable land becomes ever scarcer as natural resources are depleted. There is a revival in the use of traditional methods of sustainable agriculture but agricultural production in the laboratory is also more common. Food prices increase considerably. Consumption is local.

International cooperation is a thing of the past. It is very much a case of "every community for itself".



A SCENARIO 5?

In developing these four scenarios it became clear that there is scope for a fifth, more liberal, and with a population which is more urban, in which agriculture is automated and there is no longer any role for smallholders.

In this scenario it is multinational corporations that dominate agricultural production and have control of the food supply. It is multinational corporations who appropriate all the land and keep it for themselves in order to feed the world. From any point of view, this scenario is repulsive, and quite unacceptable.

4

Long Term Issues

From these four scenarios (and the outline of a fifth) the following 10 key issues emerged.

- What can international development cooperation do to bring about a transition to sustainable agroecology when governments and international bodies have little interest in promoting it, and the political, legal and regulatory environment is not conducive to it?
- How can we ensure that no group feels so excluded that it will consider resorting to violence as a route to emancipation?
- How can access to limited natural resources be managed as the population grows? This is particularly important in parts of Africa.
- How can we ensure that all players in the supply and distribution chain are fairly rewarded? Agricultural labourer or business executive, producer or consumer, in the developing world or in the developed world, guaranteed access to essentials is vital.
- When it comes to climate change and energy consumption, how do we reconcile the different interests and expectations of the developing and developed worlds, at the level both of the individual and of the collective?
- How can resources be deployed (technology and finance, in particular) to bring about a society which is fairer, with higher moral standards?
- How do we reconcile the differing opinions on the extent to which it is possible to change the world?
- How can democratic governments and institutions (public, private, civil society), committed to open governance, work with regimes that are authoritarian or anarchic? How can part or all of the responsibility for cooperation be transferred to organisations in the developing world? What can we do to make young people take an interest in agriculture?
- How can the reality of international relations be reconciled with global sustainable development goals whilst continuing to respect the freedom of NGOs?
- How can we make use of justice and the law to oppose the multinational lobby, and to combat the lack of government response to global warming and the social crisis?

5) The World in 2060

In 2060 the need to feed a global population of around ten billion is paramount. The planet is suffering the effects of global warming, and of decades of irresponsible exploitation of natural resources in the name of excessive industrialisation, including industrialisation of the food production chain. More than ever, it is in need of equilibrium and harmony, of respect and protection for its land, its biodiversity and its landscapes. At the same time, those who live on the planet expect their health to be safeguarded, their environment to be protected, and to have access to a suitable, adequate diet.

Four essentials

Out of the collective exercise came four essentials - beacons towards which to steer a long-term strategy.

- **1** A system of sustainable agriculture, fair at every level from the local to the global, which respects social justice, and which can feed the world with dignity whilst protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity;
- **2** A willingness to honour farmers' rights in respect of the land and of food security, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas;
- **3** An understanding of what goes on at grassroots level, essential for the development of an ethical approach to social justice, including the formulation and implementation of moral and legal standards, at national and international level;
- **4** Collaboration between civil society in both developed and developing worlds so as to bring about a new order based on the social economy.

ESSENTIAL 1

A system of sustainable agriculture, fair at every level from the local to the global, which respects social justice, and which can feed the world with dignity whilst protecting the environment and preserving biodiversity.

By 2060 the public has come to expect the introduction of a new approach to agriculture and to feeding the world, and public and community policies reflect the fact that access to a healthy diet is now acknowledged to be a basic human right.

This leads to an acceleration in the transition to a new order, in response to climate change and environmental damage (loss of biodiversity is 50% attributable to agriculture).

Private citizens, along with other stakeholders, appreciate that they all have a fundamental role to play in the transition. More appropriate communication by government, by other authorities and by NGOs have made them aware of their responsibilities, and the inconsistencies inherent in them.

There is massive public support, worldwide, for investment in social change and the adoption of ecological methods, underpinned by a desire to improve social and territorial cohesion.

At the same time governments have taken on board the need for governance which is more consistent with socially-cohesive development. Much more effort is devoted to the fight against inequality and poverty, resulting in an improved standard of living for rural and urban populations alike.

The price of food more and more accurately reflects the external negativities involved in its production, following, most importantly, the introduction of a carbon tax aimed at discouraging the transport of goods over long distances. Shipments of this kind are responsible for 4% of all greenhouse emissions attributable to agriculture, with packaging accounting for a further 7%.

Producers are paid more, allowing players in all parts of the supply chain to earn a decent income.

A new approach to taxation encourages sustainable consumption and results in new equilibria.

Public policy is specifically designed to encourage the move to new sustainable food systems, both in developing and in developed economies, principally by providing a huge degree of support for the development of traditional and alternative (non-industrial) methods of agriculture, and by encouraging smallholders in their good work.

Businesses have made big changes in response to new regulations and to a shift in what consumers expect of them. Most have adapted to the social economy as the number of co-operatives grows. Some have not, but even these companies have adopted a more collective approach to the way they operate, make decisions and distribute profits.

ESSENTIAL 2

A willingness to honour farmers' rights in respect of the land and of food security, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2018, reaffirms that the right to development is an inalienable human right, and that international cooperation can supplement national efforts with appropriate measures. For interested parties it specifies what such measures could include:

- Ensuring that relevant international cooperation, including international development programmes, is inclusive, accessible and pertinent to peasants and other people working in rural areas;
- Facilitating and supporting capacity-building, including through the exchange and sharing of information, experiences, training programmes and best practices;
- Facilitating cooperation in research and in access to scientific and technical knowledge;
- Providing, as appropriate, technical and economic assistance, facilitating access to and sharing of accessible technologies, and through the transfer of technologies, particularly to developing countries, on mutually agreed terms;
- Improving the functioning of markets at the global level and facilitating timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help to limit extreme food price volatility and the attractiveness of speculation.

More public sector research is key to this initiative, in that it gives access to new resources by making tools available to all, by the transfer of technical know-how, by marrying existing knowledge with new innovations, and by means of community empowerment. This encourages responsible experimentation and implementation, and results in greater autonomy for smallholders and other agricultural workers - important goals for development cooperation, and crucial to successful transition.

ESSENTIAL 3

An understanding of what goes on at grassroots level, essential for the development of an ethical approach to social justice, including the formulation and implementation of moral and legal standards, at national and international level.

It is at grass roots level, with the peasants and other agricultural labourers, that cooperation really starts. Only with an understanding of the realities of rural life, and a close relationship with the farmers and their organisations, is it possible to work out what changes are needed whilst taking account of current practice. Only by listening to those working on the land is it possible to build confidence and agree on actions. Only by accepting that the principle of subsidiarity is key to development is it possible to make rapid progress in the years to 2060.

Active engagement, regular dialogue, and democratic collaboration strengthen capabilities and generate lots of good ideas, present and future. Out of these interactions come various proposals for consideration by the authorities - for increasing fairness and equality, for documenting and making use of existing knowledge, for introducing new standards.

ESSENTIAL 4

Collaboration between civil society in both developed and developing worlds so as to bring about a new order based on the social economy.

Those who work for, or give their support to, organisations dedicated to development cooperation are first and foremost citizens of the world who are committed to engaging with civil society, and to defending the interests of agricultural workers worldwide. This commitment to a shared global future often involves advocacy and takes the form of a realist, pragmatic pedagogy intended to strengthen collaboration between NGOs so that collective action becomes more coherent. They are encouraged to take responsibility and to develop their critical faculties at the local level, so that they can make a difference themselves, by following lifestyles which support the transition. As they are the people who in practice implement state initiatives, they are able to exert a strong influence on debate and activity at the community level, and may even be able to control budget allocation and programme implementation. New legal processes, and the creation, in the context of greater decentralisation, of new forums for discussion facilitate this move to collective decision-making, with clear consequences at grass roots level.

At the heart of collective action, and key to achievement of the objectives, it is agroecology (and permaculture in particular), which, in big ways and small, flies the flag for the transition to true sustainability and is, in association with the scientific world and with traditional producers, the driving force behind more international cooperation in the development of agriculture and the food system.

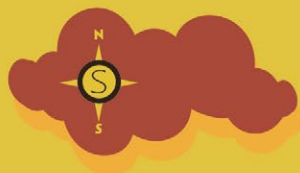
And it is clearly agroecology that delivers responsible consumption which is compatible with the resources available.

CONCLUSION

Building Bridges

The challenge is clear: how do we feed the world whilst conserving its resources for future generations? In the front line are the NGOs. Guardians of social justice, it is the NGOs who can bring about change, now and in the future. Citizens of the world themselves, they have a key role to play in the transition, and are keen to do so.

There is, of course, no easy way forward. Tackling change, living with change, and delivering change successfully can only be achieved by forging new alliances, and seeking out new positions in a world in which the stances of the major players are increasingly divergent. Fresh models can be developed only if we cultivate values that we currently lack in sufficient number, values that encourage issues to be raised and promote action in the common good, values that are inclusive like open-mindedness, community spirit, fairness and equal opportunity. These are the values that currently empower organisations committed to cooperation, and these are the values that will continue to empower them in the future.



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