



## New issues for the fruit and vegetables industry

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I would like to talk about a certain 'autism' in the subsectors, that is in fact not specific to fruit and vegetables. Indeed, each field of activity tends to become absorbed in its problems and in its own logic at the risk of sinking into a form of single thought and sometimes finding itself face to face with an obstacle that it has not seen coming.

Why is this so? I have the feeling that economics, environment and hygiene are not new issues. They are as old as man's activities in his environment, but they are questions that are more marked today. I shall illustrate this with the help of a short press review in which I mention a number of features, interventions, observations or recently published legal acts.

### The hygiene aspect

#### *The philosopher's point of view*

In a recent statement, the philosopher Michel Serres announced somewhat provocatively that McDonald's is behind in relation to José Bové. Indeed, he explains that one of the great revolutions of the twentieth century is that of the body, hygiene and health. Medicine has increased its effectiveness with the development of antibiotics, analgesics and the handling of pain and, in parallel, a decrease in the arduousness of work through the multiplication of machines. The bodies of our ancestors were sculpted to death by pain, hunger, cold, labour and disease. Bodies hid. Our bodies have freed themselves of these constraints since the mid-twentieth century and have changed.

This and the relation to our bodies has resulted, since the early 1960s, in the emergence of a new body that requires a new diet. The break is more than historical and involves the evolution of human beings. This brand-new body needs new things: a safe diet and control of reproduction. Some people, including me, remember when we used to forget to count thousands of cases of food poisoning each month, whereas today a dozen is enough to cause a scandal. It is necessary to understand the new trends in eating today. We have already gone beyond uniformity in food and are now tending towards strict requirements and diversity. Thus on this point, José Bové is ahead of McDonald's. Although the great

biotechnological revolution began in 1983 with the first transgenic plant, Michel Serres reminds us that man's use of microorganisms, such as yeast to make bread or beer, goes back about 6000 years.

#### *Food risks: increased awareness*

Another approach is that of the CREDOC (*Centre de recherche pour l'étude et l'observation des conditions de vie*) with a title 'Food risk: French awareness increasing'. It recently provided the results of an individual, national survey of food consumption performed in 1998-1999 on 2 000 persons aged 15 or more at the request of the *Direction Générale de l'Alimentation* of the French Ministry of Agriculture.

Results: 62% of the French consider that they have a good diet, but in parallel 63% state that foodstuffs present a risk to health and 35% consider that this risk is serious.

Comparison with a similar study performed only two years before in 1997 reveals a 15% increase in this percentage. The population's awareness of the risks associated with food increased very rapidly, whatever the social category or geographical coverage of the surveys. However, this awareness is all the more strong when the persons questioned feel that there is decreased product quality, inadequate control, lack of information about rearing, cropping, processing, nutritional quality and the conservation of food products.

#### *Chain of responsibility*

The European Union, through David Byrne, the Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, announced the most radical changes for 25 years in its rules for hygiene in food safety. In the proposals in four regulations, each player in the food channel will be primarily responsible for food safety. The new regulations will consist of the merging, harmonisation and simplification of the detailed, complex regulations previously scattered through 17 directives concerning food hygiene.

They innovate insofar as they can be applied to all the foodstuffs and all the operators in the chain from the farm to the table form a single, transparent

policy with regard to hygiene and also include effective instruments for ensuring food safety and the management of any future crisis in the subsectors. Stress is laid on the defining of objectives, but leaving companies scope to choose the safety measures to be adopted instead of specifying them in every detail.

## Environment

### *The priorities of the French presidency*

Four main priorities of the French presidency of the European Union are announced on the Ministry of the Environment's web site:

- 1) make a success of the conference in The Hague in November 2000 on the control of climatic change and the emission of greenhouse effect gases;
- 2) initiate discussion of the evolution of international institutions devoted to the environment and debate the opportuneness of creating a world environment organisation. This is a strong political gesture;
- 3) make progress in community policies concerning air quality, noise abatement and waste processing and enable a true political debate concerning GMOs and environmental responsibility;
- 4) contribute to the incorporation of the environment in all the European Union's policies, with stress on the taxing of energy products, maritime security and renewable energy.

The third point includes in particular a framework-directive on water. This is an important text to strengthen European water policy which has hitherto been covered by numerous sectorial directives. France will set up the conditions required for the implementation of this directive that it initiated several years ago and whose conciliation process was completed by the Portuguese presidency.

### *Precautionary principle*

Following the Vinet-Kourisky report concerning the precautionary principle, an operational guide will be proposed to social players in the form of 10 commandments:

- Has the risk been defined, appraised and graduated?
- Have the consequences of the different options been compared?
- Has an economic analysis been performed?
- Is the risk assessment structure independent?
- Is the decision envisaged revisable?

- And is the solution proportionate?
- Has a research programme been planned, aimed at removing uncertainty?
- Are the decision-making channels appropriate?
- Are they reliable and governed by a quality assurance approach?
- Has the public been well informed?

### *The TGAP*

French phytosanitary regulations are also progressing. The TGAP (*Taxe générale sur les activités polluantes* – General tax on pollutant activities) is now applied to chemicals for agricultural and similar uses. The new tax partly substitutes special levies raised by the ADEME (*Agence de l'environnement et de la maîtrise de l'énergie*). The TGAP came into force on 1 January 2000, with a reported yield of FrF300 million in the first year.

The calculation method chosen is based on a combination of toxicological and eco-toxicological criteria and a 7-class scale running from FrF0 to 11 000 per tonne. The tax is related to consumption, that is to say to the quantity of active substance sold on the domestic market. The payer is the manufacturer or the importer.

### *Pesticides in water*

The Ministry of the Environment has announced in a release concerning the abatement of pollution by agricultural chemicals that the IFEN (*Institut français de l'environnement*) has reviewed 1997-1998 data on the presence of pesticides in water. It confirms the disturbing contamination of surface and underground water. In order to remedy this, the government is implementing an overall policy consisting of regulation and fiscal aspects and also a national programme for the abatement of this pollution launched in concertation with all partners—both professionals and associations.

On the national scale, four main measures have been taken in liaison with sector players:

- 1) a programme for the recovery of packaging and unused agricultural chemicals,
- 2) strengthening of the controls concerning the use of agricultural chemicals,
- 3) performing prior studies with a view to the setting up in January 2003 of obligatory control of farm sprayers, and
- 4) the development of techniques forming alternatives to chemical crop protection.

These measures will obviously be accompanied by better information for professionals and the public.

### Rational agriculture

In his report, Guy Paillotin proposes a definition of rational agriculture: 'Rational agricultural is aimed at controlling in the best way possible, at the level of the farm as a whole, the positive and negative effects of farming on the environment, while ensuring the quality of food products and maintaining or improving the economic profitability of holdings'. He considers that the environment is a right for society and that agriculture must care for it and protect it and finally should not cause pollution. Society does not necessarily have to support this approach by farmers, except in specific cases (*Contrat Territorial d'Exploitation*). Rational agriculture is the way of linking the market mechanisms that govern production and non-market ambitions.

### The awareness and observation of consumers with regard to fruit and vegetables

#### The problem of quality

According to analysis made by Anne-Marie Moreau-Rio of the CTIFL (*Centre technique interprofessionnel des fruits et légumes*), quality is a real problem in fruit and vegetables and the agri-environment is a major preoccupation for the French. The surveys and studies on this theme performed last year by the CREDOC and more recently by the CTIFL are clear on this point.

Thus, the French are spontaneously preoccupied by the environmental consequences of animal farming and cereal crops, which have been criticised somewhat in recent years. In contrast, the natural aspect of fruit and vegetables is sought. This is a formidable advantage in comparison with industrially

produced agrifood products. Curiously, this advantage is not sufficiently used in the generic promotion of fruit and vegetables, whereas it is used by the agrifood industry (for dairy products for example). Thus, the consumer considers that fruit and vegetable a priori form a preserved universe—whose image is intact—even if 11% of people are worried and sure that they are being poisoned.

Nevertheless, consumers consider that the intrinsic quality of these foodstuffs has fallen in the past ten years, while they think that the quality of agrifood products has increased during the same period. They attribute this decrease to intensification, reckless emphasis on yields and the use of inputs in general. Quality is therefore the real problem of fruit and vegetables.

They obviously recommend a return to wisdom. 'Vegetables should be respected in the same way as people' explained one of the persons questioned, clearly expressing an extremely strong link with a vegetable or a fruit—plants from which humans draw substance. For effectively, can one imagine a more intimate link with a product that we purchase, that we eat, from which we draw energy and vital force?

I have described some of the important challenges that are issues for our society. Other speakers will describe other issues—obviously related to hygiene, the environment, economic problems and segmentation and marketing in fruit and vegetable channels and especially tropical produce.

CIRAD-FLHOR researchers will then address solutions and discussion—lines that should form approaches to solving the problems and issues in the banana and pineapple subsectors ■



### Banana and pineapple imports in the European Union: a synthesis of community law and French acts

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The various criteria are mentioned: phytosanitary aspects, food hygiene and quality factors. The latter are not within our scope and are simply mentioned in passing. Our aim is that of informing technicians and operators in order to demystify the subject.

#### Phytosanitary criteria

Phytosanitary certification by the authorities in the

exporting country (drawing up a phytosanitary certificate) is not necessary for these tropical fruits. Indeed, none of the pests listed in Directive 2000/29/EC of 8 May 2000 concerning measures to prevent the introduction of pests in the community are in principle likely to be present in shipments. I refer in particular to the fruit flies that cause worry to exporters of mangoes and other susceptible fruits and vegetables.