



International meeting 9, 10, 11 October 2008

A socially and environmentally responsible economy to feed and protect the planet: Which part can economic actors play?

All over the world, economic actors bring forth fragments of solutions to the crucial questions raised – and which will increasingly be raised – on how to feed and protect the planet.

In developed as well as developing countries, an increasing number of companies endeavour to use natural resources in a responsible and reasoned way, save water, use or look for new sources of energy, create new products, change production means, adapt logistics and sales channels, develop new cleaner technologies, recycle and create value from waste...

It is the solutions these economic actors are bringing to today's, and even more tomorrow's, major stakes the Social and Environmental World Forum wants to promote.

Three days of meetings, interaction, information and debates will therefore be held from Thursday 9 to Saturday 11 October 2008 in Lille (France) on economic initiatives to meet vital needs (food, health, clothing, housing) while better managing resources (earth, water, air, energy) and protecting the planet (carbon level, biodiversity, waste management, logistics and transport channels, etc.).

THE PROOF THROUGH « GOOD PRACTICES »

Presented and discussed by the actors themselves, good practices will be at the heart of this international meeting organised within the framework of the World Forum Lille.

Indeed company initiatives are often taken under the constraint of environmental standards imposed – legally – by various public authorities (states, European Union, international agreements). But these initiatives are sometimes also the result of marketing strategies or financial management as part of a modern and responsible approach. Identifying new targets, new needs and new demands, taking into account energy cost trends, increasing the security of production and transport channels, product quality, new sources of

labour, lead to new “business models”. These initiatives are spurred by the quest for results but also, sometimes, by a real quest for meaning. It is then an intentional approach towards social and environmental responsibility.

The World Forum Lille is trying to show how an entrepreneurship approach can play a key part in solving societal issues. Too often, and unfortunately sometimes rightly so, the quest for benefits is presented as a threat to the environment. We want to see – from exemplary practices – if, and if so how, it is possible to find some common ground between a market economy and a real concern for the environment and the future of humanity. This is not at all obvious, we agree, but an increasing number of companies accept their responsibility.

THE CHALLENGE

Feeding and protecting the planet: this challenge for a common future is not new. But it is more pressing.

Whatever controversy and differing data there might be on future demography, the running out of fossil fuel, global warming or the loss of agricultural land, no one ignores or denies that the use of natural resources and the damage caused to the environment represent the XXIst century's most serious problem.

850 million people out of the 6.5 billion that live on earth today still suffer from **hunger**, whereas others suffer from **malnutrition caused by too poor or too rich a diet**. Indeed if the effect of diet on health is acknowledged and decisive, its effect on the ability of people to develop is just as important. Over the next decades world population will continue to increase to reach 9 billion in 2050.

Furthermore **the growth of newly developed countries will doubly intensify the needs**.

On one hand, it will push the evolution of eating patterns towards a greater consumption of animal protein, the increase in demand for meat and poultry weighing heavily on the world cereal market.

On the other hand, the economic growth of these countries increases the need for raw material and energy, particularly oil. Among alternative or complementary energy sources might the use of vegetable fuels not lead to more land being taken away from food crops? and use up water resources?

The water issue is crucial. It is a vital resource the access to which is unequally shared over the planet.

Over 1 billion people do not have access to drinking water and consumption will continue to increase, worsening the inequalities between regions or countries. The shortage which is hitting or threatening some areas should be apprehended as a factor of major conflicts.

STAKES FOR A COMMON FUTURE

The issue is to feed a growing population with limited resources (and often polluted) and to meet the needs of development in a context of increased scarcity and cost of fossil fuel.

The issue is to protect the planet, that is to say the human species, animal and vegetable biodiversity and preserve resources and nature.

The issue is to feed and protect the planet. That is the fundamental responsibility of all world actors. Of course **institutional actors** (states, international organisations, territorial authorities) carry a large part of this responsibility: they set up policies, dictate standards, act as world regulators. But the reality brings out the limit of their power – even if their action remains necessary. The differences between the objectives and the observed results, for example, for the decrease in hunger victims or the Kyoto agreement implementation testify to that.

NGOs, foundations and other associations carry out numerous actions, sometimes powerful and increasingly covered in the media: reintroducing subsistence agriculture, protecting the environment and animal species, branding fair trade, supplying medicine, etc... They heighten public awareness and change consumer behaviour.

Economic actors also have a major responsibility: business leaders, farmers, professional organisations, shareholders, trade unions must play an increasingly important part in feeding and protecting the planet.

Their concrete commitment is essential: good practices over the five continents prove that accepting this responsibility is compatible with good economic results and that it can even be a powerful driver.

Spreading this exemplary behaviour, bringing these good practices into general use through examples: there is the aim of the World Forum Lille.