

For a healthy and sustainable nutrition:

Analysis of food policies in France

Julien Fosse, Peggy Furic, Cyril Gomet, Marie Hagenburg, Julien Rousselon

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Plan

- Global food challenges
- A French diet that preserves its specificities
- The worrying economic context of agricultural production
- New environmental, economic, and social challenges
- Food policies integrating ever more different dimensions
- Moving towards better policy making for a healthy and sustainable diet
- In a nutshell



Global food challenges

- **Accessibility or food quality issues**
 - Hunger persists in the world (9% of humans are undernourished) with strong regional disparities
 - Malnutrition is increasing, especially in developed countries (excess of calories, nutritional imbalances)
- **The challenges of model compatibility with the climate emergency**
 - "From farm to fork", food production is responsible for over 25% of global GHG emissions
 - A trend that will increase due to population growth and meat consumption
- **Transitioning to a vegan diet**
 - Replacing meat with plant-based proteins benefits the climate and health
 - This development must be encouraged by specific support mechanisms



A French diet that preserves its specificities (1)

- **Maintaining singularities**
 - A diet that remains structured around 3 meals, often in collective catering, with a strong cultural and social dimension ("French-style meal")
 - A diversified French diet, benefiting from multiple influences and the diversity of its terroirs
 - In global comparison, a lower prevalence of overweightness and one of the lowest diet-related mortality rates
- **But undeniable societal changes**
 - A rise in calorie intake and a growing role for processed foods, combined with the effects of a sedentary lifestyle
 - The rise of environmental and animal welfare concerns in food choices



A French diet that preserves its specificities (2)°

- Nutrition only explains a small relative share of deaths in France

France	Spain	Switzerland	Netherlands	Italy	Sweden	United Kingdom	Germany	Central Europe
39,8	37,4	44,2	45,8	49,7	56,5	57,1	63,4	144,5

France	World	OECD countries	Japan	United States	Latin America and Caribbeans	Sub-Saharan Africa	India	China	North Africa & Middle East	Russia
39,8	101,0	58,0	31,7	70,7	70,8	96,6	112,7	115,1	125,8	180,4

Source: extracted from the Global Burden of Disease database, 2019 figures, with standardised age structure

Note: figures for attributable deaths per 100,000 inhabitants



A concerning alcohol consumption

- Despite its downward trend, alcohol consumption remains high in France, and the trend in excessive consumption is not good.

Mortality per 100,000 primarily attributable to alcohol: international comparison

France	World	OECD countries	North Africa & Middle East	Japan	China	India	United States	Latin America and Caribbean	Sub-Saharan Africa	Russia
33,8	29,8	28,0	4,6	16,4	27,0	27,8	28,1	31,5	51,5	77,0

Source: extracted from the Global Burden of Disease database, figures for 2019

Note: the figures here are corrected for differences in age structure for comparison purposes.

Interpretation: per 100,000 inhabitants, there are 33.8 deaths attributable to alcohol in France (after correction for the age structure of the population)



Public health challenges to be better understood

Social inequalities in health are not being reduced in France

- Obesity rates remain higher than in some other advanced economies (Korea, Italy, Japan, Netherlands)
- The stabilisation of the prevalence of overweightness and obesity is not accompanied by any decline in the observed social gradient (particularly linked to the level of education) and obesity is three times more frequent than 30 years ago. The situation in the French overseas territories is especially worrying.

Comparison of overweightness and obesity prevalence rates in Europe

	surcharge pondérale	dont surpoids	dont obésité
Italie	44,7	33,2	11,4
France	45,4	31,0	14,4
Pays-Bas	48,3	34,2	14,1
Danemark	48,8	32,9	15,9
Belgique	48,8	32,9	15,9
Suède	49,6	35,0	14,7
Autriche	51,1	34,4	16,7
UE27	51,3	35,2	16,0
Allemagne	52,1	33,6	18,5
Espagne	52,3	36,9	15,4
Irlande	54,0	28,2	25,8
Portugal	54,5	37,3	17,2
Grèce	56,2	40,1	16,2
Turquie	56,1	35,0	21,1
Pologne	56,7	38,2	18,5
Finlande	57,7	37,3	20,3
Hongrie	58,3	34,5	23,9
Rép tchèque	58,4	39,1	19,3

taux tous âges confondus, 2019

Source : Eurostat (2019)



The worrying economic context of agricultural production

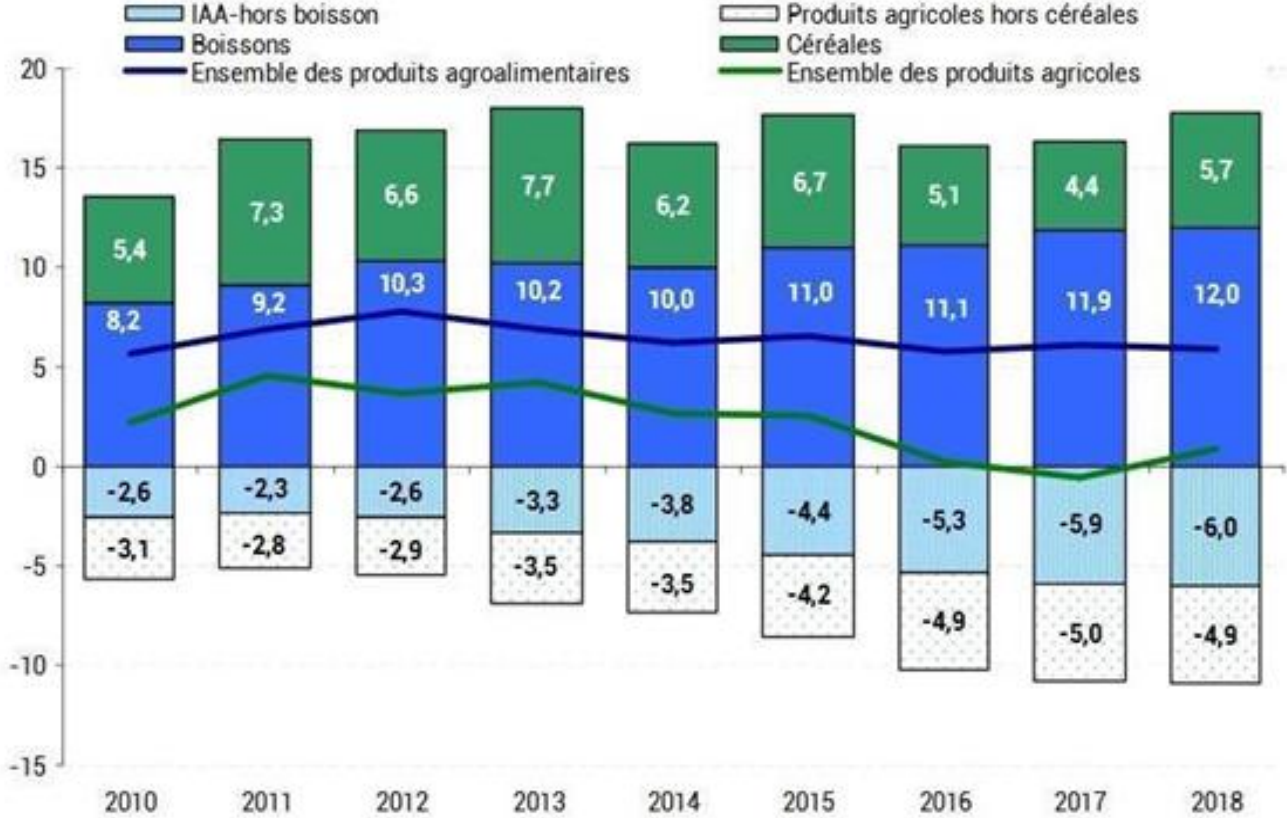
- **Significant socio-economic difficulties**
 - Level and variability of income, often modest despite differences between sectors, ageing of the agricultural workforce, working conditions, etc.
 - Challenges to overcome in terms of the attractiveness and renewal of professions
- **Nutritional autonomy is deteriorating**
 - The agricultural and agri-food surplus is eroding; it is based on wines and spirits and cereals
 - There is a decrease in the production of certain products that are essential for the promotion of balanced and healthy diets (fruit and vegetables, fish)
 - High added value sectors fail to meet demand (AB)
 - These unfavourable developments reflect a loss of competitiveness and/or problematic business models (intensive production dependent on imported food)



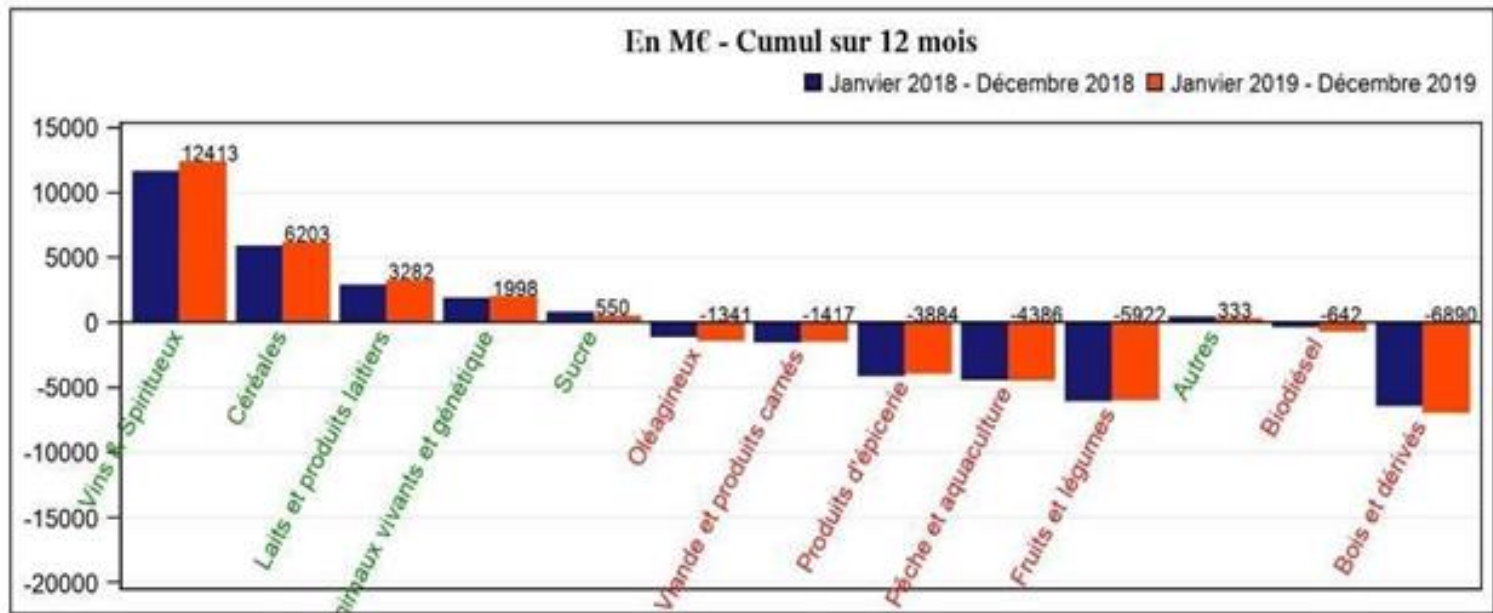
Evolution of the trade balance of agricultural and agri-food products

Source : DGDDI (2019), Études et éclairages, n° 85, Decembre 6

The total trade balance is the sum of agri-food and agricultural products



Trade balance by sector



Source : FranceAgriMer « Tableau de bord des résultats à l'export des filières agricoles et agroalimentaires 2019 » / DGDDI data



New environmental, economic, and social challenges (1)

- **New environmental risks**
 - Our food system is responsible for 19% of territorial GHG emissions.
 - In a context of global warming, the use of water is a central issue.
 - Agricultural production is the source of diffuse pollution, generating risks of exposure to chemical substances that may combine ("cocktail effects").
- **Prices that seem to be rising faster than for our neighbours**
 - Production cost issues, including in the agri-food industry; differentials in the use of posted or even illegal labour that remain to be objectively assessed
 - Margins on fresh produce are fairly similar between supermarkets and retailers



New environmental, economic, and social challenges (2)

- A sharp increase in the recourse to food aid
 - Over the last decade, recourse to this aid has doubled: between 2009 and 2018, the number of beneficiaries has doubled. The IGAS reports that in 2018, 335,000 tonnes of food were distributed to 5.5 million people.
 - The first provisional results of the monitoring system for food aid in France published by the DREES and the INSEE in July 2021 also show a clear increase in the volumes distributed by associations (+10.6%) and in registrations (+7.3%) in 2020 compared to 2019.



Food policies whose priorities have evolved...

- In the 20th century, objectives: to feed with safe food
 - The microbiological safety of food has improved overall thanks to advances in hygiene and regulation
 - Agricultural production increased after the war, but only relatively guarantees our food security (dependence on certain imports)
- In the 2000s, two national programmes were set up
 - The FNHP (2001), once hailed as a pioneering public health initiative
 - The National Nutrition Programme (NNP) (2010), initially very cross-cutting and then gradually refocused on agricultural and agri-food stakeholders



... towards a multidimensional approach

- The Climate and Resilience Act (art. 265) enshrines a multi-dimensional approach in a "systemic" approach to nutrition through its objectives and instruments:
 - Objectives: Health, environment (greenhouse gases, biodiversity), economy (food sovereignty), social justice, food education for young people, promotion of local and seasonal products, nutritional and organoleptic quality...
 - Instruments: a national strategy for food, nutrition, and climate, framing the orientations of the National Food Programme and the National Nutrition and Health Programme



Moving towards better policy making for healthy and sustainable food (1)

- Making the national food-climate-health strategy provided for in the Climate Resilience Act a comprehensive long-term strategy
 - The transition of a food system takes place over a longer period of time than that of the NNP and FNHPs, and in a more global environment than that of national policies (importance of European policies - CAP - and international trade). It calls for multi-annual programming that goes beyond the framework of a term of office, based on clear milestones and *ex ante* evaluation.
 - Implementing a strategy for anchoring operational programmes also requires the mobilisation of a wide range of expertise and the organisation of an open and transparent debate, involving all stakeholders and based on bodies recognised for their independence.



Moving towards better policy making for healthy and sustainable food (2)

- Base ministerial programs on common good practices
 - Designing actions so as to ensure that they can be evaluated
 - Take greater account of French scientific expertise and experience abroad
- Improving the animation of local policies
 - Beyond the necessary tools for exchanging practices, there is the question of encouraging actors to use them, and of identifying evaluators.
 - In the case of the Territorial Food Projects, building a methodological and evaluation reference framework, which is lacking, with the key actors, in order to aim for an upmarket approach and continuous improvement



Room for improvement in existing policies

- **Regarding the NNP**
 - Lack of outcome indicators hinders evaluation, which remains sporadic
- **Regarding the FNHP**
 - Social and cultural determinants ("food environment") have only recently been taken into account, hence a lack of hindsight
 - Some options remain below the level of expert opinion (arbitration of voluntary commitments/regulatory measures, methods of regulating advertising, "behavioural" taxes)
- **Regarding Food Aid**
 - Nutritional quality remains uneven
 - Knowledge of the public needs to be improved
- **Regarding educational policies and territorial food projects**
 - A lack of managers and tools for sharing and evaluating initiatives



New levers for progress

- Regarding economic issues
 - The prospect of a "carbon adjustment" at the EU's borders, mentioned in the Green Deal, may help limit certain imports.
- Regarding public health and environmental issues
 - The deployment of the Nutriscore, which continues in France and in several European countries, has an impact on consumer choices, in the same way as environmental labelling
- Regarding social issues (food aid)
 - The €100 million provided for in the recovery plan to support associations, particularly in the fight against food insecurity



Desirable developments in food policies (1)

- On environmental matters
 - Work towards a more environmentally friendly rebalancing of the CAP, particularly to reduce the consumption of fertilisers and pesticides
- On economic matters
 - Through the transition, increase our food sovereignty by facilitating the relocation of production for which we are currently in deficit (fruit and vegetables, animal feed).
 - Continue and strengthen actions aimed at a better distribution of added value in the production, processing, and distribution chain



Desirable developments in food policies (2)

- On sanitary matters
 - Use regulatory obligations to limit the supply of low nutritional quality products whose consumption contributes to health inequalities (and/or more demanding and binding commitment charters)
 - Assess the interest and feasibility of the project discussed in the European Parliament to modulate VAT based on the nutritional quality (sugar, fat, salt content) and the carbon footprint of food
 - More explicitly recall the health issues, including nutritional ones, associated with alcohol consumption (mention of energy intake and reinforcement of health messages)



In a nutshell

- In order to move towards a healthy diet, public policies have first focused on food safety, so that food is not contaminated or toxic, and then on the nutritional balance of the diet:
 - The goal of "non-toxic" food has largely been achieved, although attention is now turning to new types of health risks
 - The objective of a healthy diet has made significant progress, and France scores well in international comparison
 - However, these results are fragile and need to be consolidated and supplemented, particularly to combat social differences in diet
 - France is much less well placed when it comes to alcohol consumption, whose negative impact on health is of an order of magnitude comparable to that of the entire diet (excluding alcohol)



In a nutshell

- Public policies are now explicitly geared towards the objective that food should not harm the planet:
 - The FAO and WHO have adopted a common definition of the guiding principles of healthy AND sustainable food; the Climate and Resilience Act is similarly inspired;
 - Some specific topics are already well identified: for example, reducing the share of beef and dairy products, accompanied by changes in animal husbandry practices, can contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions while being favourable to health
 - Tomorrow, our diet will evolve to take into account our health and, increasingly, that of the planet.

