

European CAP-IRE research project

**Summary of responses from the local expert committees in
the French Centre and Midi-Pyrénées regions**

to the questionnaire on rural area issues and the impact of the
CAP in their region

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1. Introduction

1.1. The objectives of the CAP-IRE project

The CAP-IRE project is a research project financed by the European Commission for a period of three years (from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2010). It is being conducted by 11 research teams in nine European Union countries (Germany, Bulgaria, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom). It is co-ordinated by the Italian team, the Department of Rural Economics at the University of Bologna. The French research team is the SMART (Agricultural Structures and Markets, Resources and Territories) Joint Research Unit (UMR) based at the French National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) in Rennes.

The purpose of the CAP-IRE (“Common Agricultural Policy: Impact on Rural Economies”) project is to evaluate the different impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with a view of developing new tools to help design the future CAP based on a better understanding of the socio-economic mechanisms at work in rural areas. The project therefore seeks to identify rural area issues in a number of European regions, to evaluate the CAP’s past impact on these rural areas, and to forecast potential developments in European rural areas over the next ten years based on different CAP scenarios. The project takes a new approach in that it looks at the CAP’s effects on the rural world at large rather than just the agricultural environment.

The project’s analyses will cover six focuses:

- A. Farm structural adjustment, investment and innovation;
- B. Interactions between agriculture and other economic sectors in rural areas;
- C. The environment and spatial concerns in rural areas;
- D. Society and the rural world;
- E. Interactions between rural and non-rural communities; interactions between European rural areas and rural areas in the rest of the world;
- F. Suitable types of governance for rural areas.

Some analyses will be applied more specifically to certain regions in the project’s partner countries. In France, two NUTS2 regions are concerned: the Centre Region and the Midi-Pyrénées Region.

1.2. The CAP-IRE project phases

The first phase of the project, conducted in 2008, collected local experts’ opinions on rural area issues and the CAP’s impact in the focus regions. This entailed setting up local expert committees (also referred to as local participatory networks, LPN, in the CAP-IRE project’s description of tasks) for each region. In France, we contacted experts in May and defined the final composition of the committees (approximately fifteen people) for the two regions in June. We sent them a questionnaire containing 11 questions in June and received and compiled their answers over the summer. We presented a summary of these responses to each committee: to the Centre Region local committee in Orléans on 19 September and to the Midi-Pyrénées Region local committee in Toulouse on 8 October. This document contains this summary and reports on the discussions held at these meetings.

The second phase of the project will be a survey of farmers (100-150 in each region covered by the project) in 2009. The survey will focus on farmers’ relations with the rural areas and their strategies in view of CAP policy. The questionnaire will be formulated partly on the basis of the answers received from each region’s local committee and partly in line with data required for the analyses (by main focuses A to F).

The third phase of the project (in 2009 and 2010) will analyse the survey data and other secondary data. Preliminary findings (late 2009) and final findings (2010) will then be presented to the local expert committees in order to obtain their opinions on the interpretation of the findings concerning their specific regions.

1.3. Composition of the local expert committees in the Centre Region and the Midi-Pyrénées Region

A number of rural world stakeholders were contacted in their capacity as representatives of society, the environment and agriculture in both of the French regions concerned.

A total of 27 stakeholders were contacted in the Centre Region, 22 of whom accepted our invitation and 15 of whom answered the questionnaire and were therefore asked to take part in the meeting of 19 September. These 15 people are listed in Table 1. Of the 20 stakeholders contacted in the Midi-Pyrénées Region, 15 accepted our invitation and 11 of these answered the questionnaire. These 11 institutions (sometimes two people per institution) are listed in Table 2. Only ten institutions were invited to the meeting on 8 October, as we received one questionnaire after this meeting.

Table 1: Members of the Centre Region’s local expert committee

Didier AUGER	“Confédération Paysanne” (farmers’ union) of Centre NUTS2 Region (Regional Spokesperson)
Aude BOURON	Hunters’ Federation of Centre NUTS2 Region (Director)
Joël CARRIGNON	“Coordination Rurale” (farmers’ union) of Loiret NUTS3 Region (President)
Sandrine CLEMENT	Loiret NUTS3 regional division of the Ministry of Agriculture (“DDAF”) (Head of the Agricultural Economics Service)
Etienne GANGNERON	“FDSEA” (farmers’ union) of Cher NUTS3 Region (President)
Monique GUEGUEN	Regional Technical Centre for Consumer Affairs in the Centre NUTS2 Region, and Association of Consumers “Familles de France”
Guy JANVROT	Nature Centre (Association for nature protection) (President)
Kévin LEMAIRE	Farmer, Loiret NUTS3 Region
Alain LEROUX	Loiret NUTS3 regional division of the association supporting farm structures (“ADASEA”) (Director)
Valéry MORARD	French Institute for the Environment (“IFEN”) (Head of the Department of Environmental Knowledge)
Jean MOUZAY	Regional Technical Centre for Consumer Affairs in the Centre NUTS2 Region
Gabriel RIOU	Water Agency in Loire-Bretagne Region (Centre-Loire Regional Delegate)
Annie SIRET	Farmers’ Security Fund in Loire area (“MSA Cœur-de-Loire”) (President)
Benoît TASSIN	Regional Chamber of Agriculture in Centre NUTS2 Region (Head of the Commission for Economic Studies and Prospective, Development of the Crop Sector)
Bruno VERKEST	“FDSEA” (farmers’ union) of Loiret NUTS3 Region (head of the Dairy Division)

Note: Region NUTS2 Centre consists of 6 NUTS3 regions (Cher, Eure-et-Loir, Indre, Indre-et-Loir, Loir-et-Cher, and Loiret).

Table 2: Members of the Midi-Pyrénées Region’s local expert committee

Christophe COGNET	Pyrénées National Nature Park (Head of National Heritage Management and Development Department)
Christian FOURNIER	National Fruit, Vegetable, Wine and Horticulture Board (“VINIFLHOR”) of Midi-Pyrénées NUTS2 Region (Regional Delegate)
Julien FRAYSSIGNES	Midi-Pyrénées Regional Food Quality Institute (“IRQUALIM”) (Researcher)
Aude GERAUD; Karine SAINT-HILAIRE	Hunters’ Federation of Midi-Pyrénées Region (Adviser on Agricultural Development for Wild Fauna; Director)
Stéphane GIEULLES; Hervé PELOFFI	“FRSEA” (farmers’ union) of Midi-Pyrénées NUTS2 Region (Director; President)
Régis HOCHART; Patrick KIRCHNER	“Confédération Paysanne” (farmers’ union) of Midi-Pyrénées NUTS2 Region (National Spokesperson; Regional Spokesperson)
Bernard LANNES; Sophie MICHAUX	“Coordination Rurale” (farmers’ union) of Midi-Pyrénées NUTS2 Region (Regional Spokesperson; Manager)
Christian MONTGOBERT	Midi-Pyrénées NUTS2 Regional Chamber of Agriculture (Economic Analyst)
Bernard PLADEPOUSAUX	Farmers’ Security Fund in Pyrénées area (“MSA Midi-Pyrénées-Sud”) (President) and Farm management and accountancy Centre (“CER”) in Hautes-Pyrénées NUTS3 Region (President)
Jean-Claude TEURLAY; Laurence TOURET	Midi-Pyrénées NUTS2 regional division of the Ministry of Agriculture (“DRAF”) (Head of the Agricultural Economics Service; Analyst at the Agricultural Economics Service)
Alain TOURNE	Midi-Pyrénées NUTS2 regional division of the National Agency of Farm Structure Improvement (“CNASEA”) and Mayor of L’Isle Jourdain (Gers NUTS3 Region)

Note: Region NUTS2 Midi-Pyrénées consists of 8 NUTS3 regions (Ariège, Aveyron, Haute-Garonne, Hautes-Pyrénées, Gers, Lot, Tarn and Tarn-et-Garonne).

1.4. The questionnaire sent to the local committee experts

The questionnaire sent to the experts contained the eleven following questions:

Question 1: What, in your opinion, are the strengths and weaknesses of the Centre/Midi Pyrénées Region as a whole (rural and non-rural areas)?

The experts were asked to list their proposed strengths in order of importance, with 1 being the most important, and to do the same with the weaknesses.

Question 2: How would you define a rural area?

This was an open question for the purpose of comparing the experts’ opinions with the official definitions.

Question 3: What, in your opinion, are currently the main strengths and weaknesses of the rural areas in the Centre/Midi Pyrénées Region?

The experts were asked to list their proposed strengths in order of importance, with 1 being the most important, and to do the same with the weaknesses.

Question 4: What other weaknesses do you think could emerge in the Centre/Midi Pyrénées Region rural areas in the next ten years?

The experts were asked to list their proposals in order of importance, with 1 being the most important.

Question 5: What do you think the agricultural sector contributes to the rural areas in the Centre/Midi Pyrénées Region?

This question was divided into three sub-questions:

5.A. What does agriculture as a whole contribute?

5.B. What do the farms contribute?

5.C. What do the rural areas' agriculture-related businesses (food industry, co-operatives, vets, mechanics, slaughterhouses, etc.) contribute?

The experts were asked to rank their answers to each of these sub-questions in order of importance, with 1 being the most important.

Question 6: How do you think these contributions will change in the next ten years?

This question was divided into three sub-questions:

6.A. How will the contributions of agriculture as a whole change?

6.B. How will the farms' contributions change?

6.C. How will the contributions of the rural areas' agriculture-related businesses (food industry, co-operatives, vets, mechanics, slaughterhouses, etc.) change?

No ranking was requested for these questions.

Question 7: What, in your view, are the major effects of the CAP (1st and 2nd pillars) on the rural areas in the Centre/Midi Pyrénées Region?

The experts were asked to rank their answers in order of importance, with 1 being the most important.

Question 8: How do you think the role of the CAP (1st and 2nd pillars) will change in the next ten years?

This was an open question.

Question 9: In view of your answers to the above question, what subjects do you think call for a research focus to help define the future CAP and implement it in the Centre/Midi Pyrénées Region?

The experts were asked to rank their answers in order of importance, with 1 being the most important.

Question 10: How much emphasis should research place on the six main focuses of the CAP-IRE project?

Unlike Question 9, which was open, Question 10 called for an evaluation of specific research subjects, i.e. the CAP-IRE project's six research focuses. The experts were asked to rank these six research focuses in order of importance, attributing the rank of 1 to the subject they felt to be the most important, and to propose more specific subjects for each focus.

The questionnaire merely listed the six main research focuses. The experts' responses revealed that it would have been useful to define these focuses for them. Consequently, at the meetings on 19 September and 8 October, we provided more details on what was behind these six focuses. These details are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Definition of the CAP-IRE project's six research focuses as presented at the meetings with the experts

The CAP-IRE project's six research focuses	What we mean by that
A Farm structural adjustment, investment and innovation	How farm structures are changing (size, combination of inputs, use of inputs external to the farm, etc.)
B Interactions between agriculture and other economic sectors in rural areas	Links with upstream and downstream sectors; place of agriculture in economic activity; pluriactivity and other sources of income
C Spatial dimension and environmental sustainability	Positive/negative effects of agriculture on the environment (pollution, overexploitation of resources, the landscape, land use, etc.)
D Society and the rural world	Social changes in rural areas (ageing, exodus, social exclusion, rural community development) Place of farmers in rural society
E 1- Interactions between rural and non-rural communities 2- Interactions between European rural areas and rural areas in the rest of the world	1- Relations between rural dwellers and rural incomers; urbanisation 2- International effects: food, energy and labour market trends; relocation of production; WTO talks
F Suitable types of governance for rural areas	What policy and what stakeholders (public/private, interest groups, level of subsidiarity, etc.)

Question 11: Other comments

This was provided for the experts to give their opinion on the questionnaire, aspects not addressed, etc.

1.5. The meetings with the local committees on 19 September and 8 October

At the meetings on 19 September and 8 October, we presented our response classification proposals to the local committees. We grouped the experts' responses into main categories with a general heading and a ranking (rank 1 being the most important category from the experts' point of view). We ranked responses based on three considerations: i) the total number of times the aspect, idea or concept was mentioned in the experts' responses; ii) the number of times it was ranked priority 1 by the experts (for the questions where a ranking was requested); and iii) the number of times it was ranked priority 1 or priority 2.

At the meetings, the experts were asked to discuss five points:

- The arguments put forward by the other committee experts to defend their opinions;
- Our proposals for the classification of ideas into main categories;
- Our heading proposals for these main categories;
- Our ranking proposals for these main categories;
- Aspects that were not, or were insufficiently, covered in their written responses.

The meetings were held from 1.45 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. and focused on each question in turn (presentation followed by discussion), with approximately 15 minutes spent on each question. Only Question 1 was not presented, due to a lack of time. The most time was spent discussing questions 3, 4 and 7. Questions 5 and 6 were covered the fastest.

A total of 12 Centre Region local committee experts and three INRA representatives attended the meeting in Orléans on 19 September. A total of 13 Midi-Pyrénées Region local committee experts and two INRA representatives attended the meeting in Toulouse on 8 October.

The following two sections present the Centre Region committee responses followed by the Midi-Pyrénées Region committee responses. The last chapter concludes.

2. Responses from the Centre Region’s local expert committee

The classification and ranking tables shown below are those presented to the 19 September meeting, amended to reflect the meeting’s discussions. Our amendments concern our proposed category headings, content and rankings. The changes have been directly incorporated into the tables, but our initial proposals can be found in the body of the text.

2.1. Question 1: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Centre Region as a whole (rural and non-rural areas)?

There was not enough time to present this question at the meeting on 19 September. Consequently, our following proposals (Table 4 and Table 5) were unable to be discussed or approved by the experts.

a) Strengths

Based on the experts’ written responses, we have classified the Centre Region’s main strengths into four main categories (Table 4). The first main strength is that it is **an attractive region** (mentioned a total of 23 times, with 11 ranked priority 1) with high tourism potential (Val de Loire, Sologne, agritourism, PDOs, etc.), high territorial diversity, a good quality of life (large surface area with low population density, temperate climate, etc.) and natural habitats with a wealth of biodiversity. The second main strength is that **the region is relatively accessible** (mentioned a total of 20 times, with 6 ranked priority 1). In particular, it is close to Paris and its outskirts (mentioned by 11 experts, six times in priority 1 or 2). The third main strength is **the strong regional economy** (mentioned 18 times, with 5 ranked priority 1), especially in the agricultural sector (mentioned by 9 experts, with 7 ranked priority 1 or 2). These three main strengths are the most important and rank far ahead of the last strength (mentioned only 5 times), that of being **a dynamic region**.

Table 4: The experts’ opinions on the Centre Region’s main strengths

	In the experts’ responses:			Our ranking proposal
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
High tourism potential	9			
Territorial diversity	5			
Quality of life	7			
Natural habitats with a wealth of biodiversity	2			
→ An attractive region	23	11	12	1
Close to Paris	11			
Good transport infrastructures	6			
Dense network of middle-sized towns	2			
Central geographic location	1			
→ Relatively accessible	20	6	12	2
Competitive, high value-added agriculture	9			
Well-developed industries and craft trades	5			
Potential for renewable energies	3			
Economic vitality	1			
→ A strong regional economy	18	5	9	3

Vitality	2			
Dynamic towns	2			
Young population	1			
→ A dynamic region	5	1	2	4

b) Weaknesses

The experts' responses to the questionnaire listed quite a number of Centre Region weaknesses, which were hard to group together. We propose here a classification into five main weaknesses, given in Table 5. The first weakness is that it is **a region with little unity** (mentioned a total of 17 times, with 6 ranked priority 1). This refers in particular to the lack of cultural and regional unity (mentioned by 8 experts, 5 of whom ranked it 1 or 2) and the absence of a regional capital (only competing middle-sized towns). Just behind in order of importance comes **a region with certain areas experiencing difficulties** (mentioned 17 times, with 5 ranked priority 1): the southern part of the region, in particular, and the rural areas. **A region with a fragile natural habitat** is the third major weakness (mentioned 11 times, with 4 ranked priority 1). This is due to the increase in artificial land cover, agricultural specialisation in cereals production with the disappearance of livestock and tree farming, and pressure on the water resource. The fourth main weakness is that it is a **relatively isolated region** (mentioned 11 times, with 2 in priority 1) with an absence of major transport infrastructures due especially to the proximity of the Paris transport systems. In fifth and last position comes the problem of **an underdeveloped regional economy** (9 mentions), especially in terms of the agricultural economy.

Table 5: The experts' opinions on the Centre Region's main weaknesses

	In the experts' responses:			Our ranking proposal
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Lack of cultural unity and regional identity	8			
A number of competing middle-sized towns	4			
Lack of vitality	3			
Lack of unified regional policy	2			
→ A region with little unity	17	6	10	1
South of the region less favoured	9			
Demographic downturn in the rural areas	8			
→ A region with certain areas experiencing difficulties	17	5	10	2
Growing urbanisation	5			
Agricultural specialisation in cereals	4			
Fragile water resource	2			
→ A region with a fragile natural habitat	11	4	8	3
Focus on Paris	4			
Lack of road, rail and river services	5			
Remote from sea ports	2			
→ A relatively isolated region	11	2	4	4

Unprocessed, low value-added agricultural products	6			
Weak industrial sector	2			
Underexploited tourism potential	1			
→ Underdeveloped regional economy	9	0	1	5

2.2. Question 2: How would you define a rural area?

The expert respondents defined a rural area as having four main features, listed in Table 6. The most recurrent rural area characteristic is the predominance of agricultural and forestry activities (10 experts mentioned it in their responses). This predominance is from the point of view of land use, landscape creation, the use of natural resources, contribution to the local economy and participation in the food supply. A rural area is also defined by the large place taken by nature and the countryside, without necessarily having a link with primary sector activities (for 5 experts), making it a place of relaxation, recuperation and nature conservation. This large place taken by the natural environment goes hand in hand with the area's demographic features (mentioned by 5 experts) and urbanisation characteristics (mentioned by 7 experts): low population density and small sparse towns far from major urban centres. Some experts felt that rural areas can also be defined by the distinct problems they face, such as dwindling public services. These problems are explained more in detail in Question 3.

We proposed the following summarised definition at the 19 September meeting based on these responses: "A rural area has two main characteristics: a close link with the environment and the natural habitat, and a small population concentration." However, the experts felt this definition was oversimplified as it failed to mention the economic activities specific to rural areas (primary sector activities, craft trades and SMEs).

Table 6: How the Centre Region's experts define a rural area

	Number of times mentioned in the experts' responses
Predominance of agricultural and forestry activities	10
Large place taken by nature/countryside	5
Small towns, far from large urban centres	7
Low population density	5

2.3. Question 3: What are currently the main strengths and weaknesses of the rural areas in the Centre Region?

a) Strengths

Table 7 proposes a classification of the main strengths of the Centre Region's rural areas as listed by the experts in their responses. We have proposed **productive, competitive and diversified agriculture** as the number one strength of the Centre Region's rural areas (mentioned 22 times, with 15 ranked priority 1 or 2). This strength includes various assets specific to agriculture (good agronomic potential, high-performance farms, agricultural diversity in terms of territories and production, large productive surface areas, extensive land consolidation, and the presence of some large food industry players such as Triballat and Epicentre). The second overall strength of the rural areas in the Centre Region is **power of attraction and high tourism potential** (mentioned 16 times). This is partly due to well-known

tourism sites (Loire Valley and Sologne), the space available, highly heterogeneous lands and countryside, proximity to the Paris area, high value-added agricultural production, and the presence of many quality names (designations of origin, cheese and wine). A relatively accessible and well-situated region is the third main strength (mentioned 9 times). This strength covers its urban centres and infrastructure assets. The fourth main strength is landscape and environmental diversity and a high water capacity, with protected environmental and biodiversity sites (such as the Regional Nature Park) and good renewable energies potential (wood, wind turbines and biofuels). The fifth and last main strength is the presence of active social networks in terms of agricultural community development and civil society vitality (especially environmental protection associations).

Some experts at the 19 September meeting suggested changing our initially proposed terms of “high-performance agriculture” to “productive and competitive agriculture”; “territorial diversity” to “territorial heterogeneity”; and “wealth of landscape” to “landscape diversity”. The experts also asked for the deletion of the “presence of some large food industry players” asset, which was proposed by an expert in the written responses and which we incorporated into “productive, competitive and diversified agriculture”. The experts felt that this characteristic should be classified as a weakness rather than a strength (since there are too few of these players), with a related problem being the small number of non-agricultural SMEs. The experts also put forward that there were not enough well-known quality names to make them a strong asset for the Region (since the Region is not associated with particular quality names unlike other French regions). However, they did not want this characteristic to be deleted. The experts considered that the proposed priority 3 strength (“a relatively accessible and well-situated region”) was too flattering given the real situation (the south of the Region is poorly served and the region is far from the ports). We consequently amended it to “certain areas relatively accessible and well situated”. The experts proposed that a high capacity in terms of water reserves be included in environmental diversity (while underscoring the fragile nature of this resource, as mentioned in more detail in the following section on weaknesses). They also found that it was hard to separate out the landscape and environmental diversity strength from the power of attraction and high tourism potential strength. Last but not least, some experts were surprised to see that other experts had put forward civil society vitality as a strength, but did not ask for it to be deleted following the discussion.

Table 7: The experts’ opinions on the main strengths of the rural areas in the Centre Region

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Agronomic/pedoclimatic potential	7			
Farm performance	6			
Agricultural diversity	4			
Large productive surface areas	3			
Extensive land consolidation	1			
Some large food industry players	1			
→ Productive, competitive and diversified agriculture	22	10	15	1

Tourism potential and power of attraction	7			
Heterogeneous territories and countryside	5			
Value-added production and quality names	4			
→ Power of attraction and high tourism potential	16	5	9	2
Proximity to urban centres	4			
Major road infrastructures	3			
Proximity to consumer catchment areas	2			
→ Certain areas relatively accessible and well situated	9	3	6	3
Potential for the development of renewable energies	3			
Environment; presence of remarkable sites	3			
→ Landscape and environmental diversity and a high water capacity	6	0	6	4
Agricultural community development	1			
Rural vitality and local civil society	3			
→ Active social networks	4	1	3	5

b) Weaknesses

As shown by Table 8, the weaknesses most often identified by the experts were those associated with social change, whether in the agricultural sector or other sectors. We have therefore proposed [deterioration of the social fabric](#) as the number one weakness (mentioned 26 times, with 15 ranked priority 1 or 2). This weakness covers the classic social problems in rural areas (ageing, exodus, loss of economic activities and services) and includes the problems raised resulting from different rural players living side by side (farmers, non-agricultural rural dwellers, and rural incomers), as mentioned four times by the experts. We propose as the second major weakness [the agricultural replication of the social problem](#) (mentioned 21 times, with 7 ranked priority 1 or 2). The classic demographic problems (ageing, depopulation and a low rate of renewal) are replicated in agriculture with a decrease in agricultural labour force and farm set-ups, and the economic problems are there in terms of a lack of food industries, collection and processing facilities, and organic or high-quality production. We have also included farmers' isolation, mentioned by two experts, in the agricultural replication of the social problem, along with the loss of agricultural areas. The third major weakness we identified was [agricultural pressures on the environment](#). This is due to agricultural specialisation in certain areas (e.g. Beauce and Champagne Berrichonne) and the abandonment of others (e.g. Sologne). It is also caused by larger farms and an increase in production constraints. All of this leads to deterioration in the countryside, biodiversity, the water resource and the soil. The experts raised the point that the increase in farm size could also be a symptom of the deterioration of the social fabric. The fourth and final major weakness put forward is [a territorial and land development policy definition problem](#). This is reflected by a territorial imbalance.

Great emphasis was placed on the loss of agricultural surface areas at the discussion on 19 September. The experts stated that the reduction in regional utilised agricultural area was partly due to the absence of a regional land development agency. It was also said to be due to the fact that agricultural land is not seen as a resource in its own right to be protected, but as an adjustment variable in the regional planning policies. The experts therefore asked for the lack of a land development policy to be added to the initial title we proposed for the weakness ranked in fourth place (“a territorial policy definition problem”). The experts also asked for the loss of value-added to be added to the sub-categories of weaknesses under “agricultural replication of the social problem”. They felt that this loss was a problem for the entire Centre Region, not just for the rural areas. Lastly, the experts raised the lack of forward planning in the Region, since future problems are not currently taken into account in policymaking.

Table 8: The experts’ opinions on the main weaknesses of the rural areas in the Centre Region

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Population ageing, depopulation, exodus of young people	12			
Disappearance/lack of shop businesses, industry and craft trades	5			
Disappearance/lack of services and infrastructures	5			
Problem with farmers, rural dwellers and rural incomers living side by side	4			
→ Deterioration of the social fabric	26	5	15	1
Low number/loss of agricultural labour force, few new farm set-ups	5			
Absence of food industries and collection and processing facilities, loss of value-added	5			
Agricultural area loss (urbanisation) and abandonment	4			
Isolation of farmers	2			
Low level of organic farming and high-quality production	2			
→ Agricultural replication of the social problem	21	4	7	2
Agricultural specialisation in certain areas, loss of speed with certain agricultural productions	9			
Pressures on the environment (water, etc.), deterioration of the countryside	8			
Increase in farm size	3			
Increase in production constraints	1			
→ Agricultural pressures on the environment	18	3	9	3

Weak local and regional policies	4			
Agricultural and natural territorial heterogeneity	3			
Territorial imbalance in terms of urban pressure and population	2			
Far from the trading ports	2			
Low regional agricultural budget	1			
→ A territorial and land development policy definition problem	12	5	5	4

2.4. Question 4: What other weaknesses could emerge in the Centre Region rural areas in the next ten years?

In their responses to the questionnaire, the experts generally felt that the current weaknesses in the Centre Region’s rural areas would be the same in ten years’ time: deterioration of the social fabric (also in agriculture), environmental problems due to agriculture, and weak territorial policy. However, a number of additional problems were put forward under these main categories of weaknesses (in blue in Table 9): a lack of skilled workers in rural areas; growing real estate prices and transport costs; the fact that farmers find it hard to live on their farms due to competition for accommodation from non-agricultural rural dwellers; a change in agricultural practices, which will be needed to adjust to the new policies; and it is becoming increasingly hard to balance the productive and environmental aspects of farming. The final ranking also differs to the ranking for Question 3 (current weaknesses, Table 8), since the environmental issue moves into first place (mentioned 21 times, with 14 ranked priority 1 or 2).

At the meeting on 19 September, the experts asked to add land-use reallocation problems and land-use conflicts into the “continuing agricultural replication of the social problem” category. The discussion ultimately identified in a more general way the four main issues that are taking shape for the Centre Region’s rural areas: environment, energy, sustainable development and land use.

Table 9: The experts’ opinions on the main potential additional weaknesses in the Centre Region’s rural areas

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Depopulation, exodus of young people, lack of skilled workers	8			
Disappearance/lack of services and infrastructures	5			
Increase in real estate prices and transport costs	4			
Problem of farmers, rural dwellers and rural incomers living side by side	2			
→ A social fabric that continues to deteriorate	19	7	10	2

Low number/loss of agricultural labour force, few new farm set-ups	5			
Agricultural area loss (urbanisation, hunting/fishing), abandonment; land-use reallocation and land-use conflicts	5			
Absence of food industries and collection and processing facilities	3			
Isolation of farmers	1			
Farmers will no longer live on their farms	1			
Low level of organic farming and high-quality production	1			
→ Continuing agricultural replication of the social problem	16	5	11	3
Agricultural specialisation in certain areas, loss of speed with certain agricultural productions	8			
Pressures on the environment (water, etc.), deterioration of the countryside	6			
Increase in production constraints, changing agricultural practices	3			
Increase in farm size	2			
How to balance productive agriculture with maintenance agriculture/environmentally friendly farming	2			
→ What consideration of the environment	21	9	14	1
Weak local and regional policies	1			
Agricultural and natural territorial heterogeneity	1			
Territorial imbalance in terms of urban pressure and population	1			
→ The consistency of the territorial policy that remains to be defined	3	0	1	4

2.5. Question 5: What does the agricultural sector contribute to the rural areas in the Centre Region?

a) What does agriculture as a whole contribute?

The experts proposed a number of agricultural sector contributions to the Centre Region's rural areas. We have grouped these contributions into five categories (Table 10). The first category, ranked number 1 due to the total number of times it was mentioned and the

number of times it was ranked priority 1 or 2, is agriculture's contribution to [economic activity](#) in the rural areas. This contribution is ranked ahead of the contribution to the [food supply and food independence](#); the latter is true of agricultural in general worldwide, but not necessarily true of agriculture in the region's rural areas, since it exports a large proportion of its production outside of the region. In third place is the contribution to [employment](#). The fourth category was mentioned many times, but never ranked priority 1. This is why we have proposed placing this category in fourth place. It concerns agriculture's contribution to the [maintenance of the environment, the natural habitat and the landscape, and to the potential production of renewable energies](#). Lastly, four experts felt that agriculture contributes to [rural community development](#) in the Centre Region with its social vitality and preservation of the cultural fabric, local culture and territorial identity.

Table 10: The experts' opinions on the main contributions of agriculture to the rural areas in the Centre Region

	In the experts' responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Food supply/food independence	8	6	7	2
Economic activity	8	6	8	1
Employment	6	3	4	3
Environment and renewable energy	12	0	7	4
<i>Maintenance of the environment, natural habitat and landscape</i>	11	0	7	
<i>Opportunities for renewable energies</i>	1	0	0	
Rural community development	4	1	3	5
<i>Social vitality</i>	3	1	3	
<i>Preservation of cultural fabric</i>	1	0	0	

b) What do the farms contribute?

The experts felt that the farms (and the farmers themselves, as pointed out by one expert) help [preserve the rural fabric](#) in the region, by taking part in the local life and social relations, and by helping sustain the economy and demography. This is by far the main contribution, mentioned 22 times with 17 ranked priority 1 or 2 (Table 11). The farms and farmers also contribute to [land use and maintenance](#), the [supply of ancillary services](#) and [employment](#). These three categories were very close in terms of the number of times they were mentioned and ranked priority 1 or 2. Last but not least, the farms and farmers contribute to [local food production](#).

During the discussion on 19 September, some experts felt that the contribution to employment should be ranked higher up the scale. We initially put it in fourth place because only one mention ranked it priority 1. Following the debate, the contribution to employment was ranked in second place. Many experts at the meeting pointed out that the listed contributions were all positive, whereas negative contributions could also be mentioned (such as the negative impact on the environment). The meeting came to the conclusion that questions on the negative effects of agriculture were missing from the questionnaire, since the experts' views on this aspect were found in other unrelated questions.

Table 11: The experts' opinions on the main contributions of the farms to the rural areas in the Centre Region

	In the experts' responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Preserve the rural fabric	22	8	17	1
<i>Participation in local life and social relations</i>	10	1	7	
<i>Sustained rural economic activities</i>	8	4	6	
<i>Sustained demography</i>	4	3	4	
Land use and maintenance	8	2	4	3
<i>Maintenance of the environment</i>	5	1	2	
<i>Land use and organisation</i>	3	1	2	
Supply of ancillary services	4	2	3	4
<i>Development of related services</i>	2	1	2	
<i>Creation of reservoirs</i>	1	1	1	
<i>Community services</i>	1	0	0	
Employment	8	1	4	2
<i>Employment</i>	4	1	2	
<i>Agricultural outreach</i>	1	0	0	
Local food production	3	0	2	5

c) What do the rural areas' agriculture-related businesses (food industry, co-operatives, vets, mechanics, slaughterhouses, etc.) contribute?

Part of agriculture's contribution to the economic activity of rural areas comes from the agriculture-related businesses (food industry, co-operatives, vets, mechanics, slaughterhouses, etc.). As shown in Table 12, the [contribution to the economy](#) in the rural areas, in terms of both economic activities and employment, was mentioned 11 times by the experts and ranked priority 1 or 2 each time. We have therefore placed this contribution top of the list. The second and third main contributions by these businesses concern agricultural production assistance: [production organisation and support](#), and [production quality improvement](#). Lastly, like the farms/farmers, these businesses help [sustain the rural fabric and vitality](#). One expert also suggested in their answers to the questionnaire that the businesses allow [opening up to para-agricultural jobs](#). This contribution stands alone in our ranking, but could also be included in the contribution to the economy.

Table 12: The experts' opinions on the main contributions of rural area agriculture-related businesses to the Centre Region's rural areas

	In the experts' responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Contribution to the economy	11	8	11	1
<i>Employment</i>	9	7	9	
<i>Economic activities</i>	2	1	2	
Production organisation and support	6	3	6	2
<i>Supply of services</i>	2	2	2	
<i>Agricultural production support</i>	3	1	3	
<i>Well-knit working network</i>	1	0	1	
Quality improvement	3	1	2	3
<i>Promoting quality products</i>	2	0	1	
<i>Supporting sustainable agriculture</i>	1	1	1	
Sustaining the rural fabric and vitality	3	2	3	4
<i>Sustaining the network of middle-sized towns</i>	2	2	2	
<i>Local project momentum</i>	1	0	1	
Opening up to para-agricultural businesses	1	0	0	5

2.6. Question 6: How will these contributions change in the next ten years?

a) How will the contributions of agriculture as a whole change?

The experts found this question hard and did not discuss the change in contributions, but rather gave their opinions as to changes in agriculture itself (Table 13). We understand from these responses that the experts forecast a [decrease in agriculture's contributions to rural life and rural community development](#) (due to the decrease in agricultural workers and agriculture-related services). The experts also suggested for the future [a rethink on the production systems](#) (with, for example, greater consideration of the environment), [the development of new tools to offset the loss of income and drop in value-added](#) (such as short circuits), [the alteration of the state of the environment](#), and [land use for activities other than agriculture](#).

The experts mentioned at the meeting on 19 September that the changing shape of agriculture would mirror the CAP and that it was therefore hard to answer the question without first looking at the future CAP. They also pointed out that the two main issues for agriculture in the future would be the stabilisation of the markets and of agricultural income, and environmental protection.

Table 13: The experts' opinions on changes to agriculture's main contributions to the Centre Region's rural areas

	Number of times mentioned in the experts' responses
Changes to the countryside	
Changes to the poorest lands (used for hunting, leisure, etc.)	2
Rural areas with no economic life	1
Low contribution of agriculture to the rural economy	1
Decline in rural vitality	1
Changes to the functions of farming	
Return to the notion of food production	2
Development of the accommodation and holiday function	1
Decrease in related services	1
Decrease in agricultural workers	1
Changes to the state of the environment	
Decline in biodiversity	2
Changing landscapes	2
More frequently flooding rivers	1
Changes to agriculture	
Greater consideration of the environment in the production systems	4
Decrease in yields/ha and in agricultural income	2
Development of short circuits and of source of value-added on farms	2
Loss of farmer's power in terms of economic tools	1
Necessary increase in the technical performance of farms	1
Development of industrial and energy cultures	1
Loss of value-added in agriculture	1

b) How will the farms' contributions change?

As with the previous question, the experts gave their opinions on the changes affecting the farms as opposed to the changes to their contributions (Table 14). They felt that changes would affect the **structural aspects** (farm enlargement, specialisation and also diversification), **environmental relations** (greater environmental demands) and the impact on **society** (with a decrease in jobs, an increase in conflicts with neighbours, etc.).

Table 14: The experts' opinions on changes to the farms' main contributions to the Centre Region's rural areas

	Number of times mentioned in the experts' responses
Structural aspects	
Farm enlargement	4
Farm specialisation	3
Concentration of production tools	3
Diversification of farm activities and production methods	3
Farm take-over difficulties	2
Environmental relations	
Increase in negative impacts on the environment	2
Increase in environmental requirements	1

Society	
Decrease in the agricultural population	8
Loss of farm representativeness in rural areas	5
Decrease in related and derived jobs	4
Increase in conflicts with non-agricultural society	3
Increased farm presence in local dynamics	1
Emergence of new needs for agriculture and related services	1
Change in consumption habits	1

c) How will the contributions of the rural areas' agriculture-related businesses (food industry, co-operatives, vets, mechanics, slaughterhouses, etc.) change?

This question was also hard to answer, just like the above two questions. Table 15 nevertheless shows that the experts agree on the fact that the contribution of agriculture-related businesses will decrease because of a **loss of services** and **loss of value**, due mainly to business closures and relocations. At the same time, the experts expect to see a **change in services** (with an increase in itinerant services, for example). The experts highlight here again a possible **change in agriculture** with the simplification of production systems due to pressure from the collection and processing businesses.

Table 15: The experts' opinions on changes to the main contributions of rural area agriculture-related businesses to the Centre Region's rural areas

	Number of times mentioned in the experts' responses
Loss of services	
Business concentration/combinations/relocation	7
Decrease in/closures of establishments	4
Loss of value	
Decrease in jobs connected with these structures	2
Decrease in value-added	1
Change in agriculture	
Loss of farmer's decision-making power in production aspects	1
Changes to/simplification of the production systems	5
Changes to services	
Changes to operating methods (itinerant services, service providers, etc.) / Emergence of new sectors	4
Increase in the involvement of para-agricultural businesses in local dynamics	1

2.7. Question 7: What are the major effects of the CAP (1st and 2nd pillars) on the rural areas in the Centre Region?

The experts identified a number of CAP effects on the Centre Region's rural areas. We have grouped them into categories under the headings of positive effects and negative effects (Table 16). The general positive effect is **sustained agricultural activity**, which the experts believe would have largely disappeared without the creation of the CAP. The CAP has supported income, increased production and kept isolated rural areas going. The contribution to environmental quality and food quality was also pointed out. Nevertheless, the positive effects of the CAP were mentioned just 9 times, as opposed to 44 mentions of negative effects. These concern first of all the **weakening of the agricultural sector** (mentioned 22 times with 16 ranked priority 1 or 2) due to the downturn in agricultural workers and certain

productions and to the farms' growing dependency. **Environmental damage** is the second general negative effect. The third negative effect is not an impact on the rural areas themselves, but a negative aspect of the CAP, which is mentioned 7 times as being an **inconsistent policy** (e.g. despite the intention to sustain the farming population, the CAP has led to a decrease in new farm set-ups).

At the 19 September meeting, the “increase in farmed areas” category was a subject of debate. Some experts were surprised to see that we had classed it in the “weakening of the agricultural sector” effect when this increase could be a cause of “environmental damage” and could therefore be classed in this particular negative effect. Conversely, other experts felt that the “increase in farmed areas” category should be classed in the positive effects (“sustained agricultural activity”), as this increase in areas had maintained certain farmers’ standards of living. In the final table (Table 16), we have therefore put the “increase in farmed areas” category in three main effects: “sustained agricultural activity”, “weakening of the agricultural sector” and “environmental damage”. Some experts also found that the “increase in regional agricultural production” category should not be classed in “sustained agricultural activity”. They saw it more as a negative aspect, because it adds to “environmental damage”. In the final table, we have therefore incorporated this category into these two effects. Despite the debate on where these categories should be placed, the experts agreed on the major effects (sustained agricultural activity, weakening of the sector and environmental damage) and on their ranking. The duplications of these categories following the debate do not put this ranking in issue. At the meeting, the experts also observed that the Region’s heterogeneity had made a redistribution of the farm support possible. Nevertheless, they underscored that it was hard to see what was due to the CAP itself, because there was no “non-CAP” baseline with which to compare.

Table 16: The experts’ opinions on the major effects of the CAP on the rural areas in the Centre Region

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
POSITIVE EFFECTS				
Increase in farmed areas	5			
Increase in farmers’ standard of living; income support	3			
Inclusion of the environmental aspect/Environmental improvement	2			
Increase in regional agricultural production	1			
Sustaining isolated rural areas	1			
Sustaining family farming	1			
Contribution to quality agriculture	1			
→ Sustained agricultural activity	14	8	9	3
NEGATIVE EFFECTS				
Low number/loss of agricultural workers, few new farm set-ups	7			
Increase in farmed surface areas	5			
Loss of speed with certain types of agricultural productions	3			
Loss of value-added	3			
Increase in the vulnerability and dependency of farms	2			

Loss of regulatory tools	1			
No catch-up in standards of living between farmers and the rest of the population	1			
→ Weakening of the agricultural sector	22	13	16	1
Agricultural specialisation in certain areas	10			
Environmental pressure (water, etc.), landscape damage	5			
Increase in farmed areas	5			
Increase in regional agricultural production	1			
→ Environmental damage	21	11	13	2
Capture of farmers' support by other sectors	2			
2 nd pillar policy inconsistent	3			
Policy focuses too much on products, not enough on workers	2			
→ An inconsistent policy	7	0	3	4

2.8. Question 8: How do you think the role of the CAP (1st and 2nd pillars) will change in the next ten years?

In their answers to the question on how the role of the CAP might change, the experts put forward potential changes, which we have grouped into three aspects (Table 17). The first aspect is a shift in CAP mode with a **less regulatory CAP focused more on the environment and rural development**. A number of responses raised the possibility of a decrease in support and the complete disappearance of the CAP. Also mentioned was a total transfer of the budget to the New Member States or a complete renationalisation of the policy. The second aspect is the change in the CAP's purposes: some experts feel that the CAP will become dual purpose and will **incorporate the two issues of production and the environment**. Lastly, the third aspect concerns changes in the CAP's effects, with some effects continuing, but also a change of direction created by the market, leading the experts to raise **concerns about the success of the new policy**.

During the debate on 19 September, the experts seemed convinced that the future policy would be national and no longer be called agricultural, because it would cover more the multifunctional aspect of agriculture, which the current CAP does not.

Table 17: The Centre Region's experts' opinions on the potential change in the role of CAP

	Number of times mentioned in the experts' responses
Change in CAP mode	
Decrease in support, disappearance of the CAP, less regulatory CAP	5
Increase in consideration of the environment	4
The other rural stakeholders will receive support	3
Transfer of support from 1 st to 2 nd pillar	2
Support recoupled to production	1
Renationalisation of the CAP	1
→ A policy shift: from market regulation to a strong focus on the environment and rural development	

Change in CAP purposes	
Sustain production to meet global needs/food independence	3
Dual-purpose CAP (productive agriculture versus maintenance agriculture)	2
Correction of market discontinuation (the least profitable production, etc.)	1
→ A policy incorporating the two issues of production and the environment	
Change in the CAP's effects	
Continuation of farm enlargement	2
Change of production direction created by the market	2
Overexploitation of natural resources	1

2.9. Question 9: What subjects call for a research focus to help define the future CAP?

Question 9 was an open question, unlike Question 10 where more specific research subjects were proposed. Table 18 sums up the experts' written responses, ranked into five groups. An additional group, ranked in first place, was added in following the discussion (see below): [tools for sustainable rural life](#). The second group of research subjects concerns the most suitable [type of policy](#): research would look at how to design the future CAP by simulating the impact of different policies on a number of variables of interest. Conversely, the future CAP could be defined by first determining the [objectives of agriculture](#) and then looking into the type of policy that could meet these objectives. The different objectives proposed by the experts were, for example, maintaining diversified agriculture, the location of agriculture in the country, and food independence. Two other groups of research subjects concern specific aspects: [how to incorporate the environmental issues](#) (how to balance them with production concerns, how they are currently taken into account, etc.), [how to assist adjustment by the farms](#) (by providing support for new farm set-ups, by empowering the farms to be less dependent, etc.) and [how to take account of agriculture's place in the rural world](#) in general.

At the 19 September meeting, the experts asked for the focus to extend beyond just environmental issues and also encompass social issues. The main research question on which the experts then agreed was how to balance the three economic, environmental and social pillars in agriculture (i.e. how to achieve sustainable development) by analysing agriculture's contributions to these three fields (e.g. in terms of efficiency) and evaluating the limits on the use of natural resources by agriculture. We have summed up this question as "tools for sustainable rural life" and we have ranked it first following the debate.

The experts at the meeting also all lamented the fact that local players have no knowledge of the research on agriculture, by INRA or other research institutes, since it remains in the form of academic publications inaccessible to a public audience.

Table 18: The Centre Region's experts' opinions on subjects that call for a research focus

	In the experts' responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Tools for sustainable rural life				1
How to balance the three economic/environmental/economic pillars				
What contribution does agriculture make to these three pillars				
Consideration of environmental issues	9	3	5	3
Balance production and environmental concerns	4			
Promote and support organic farming	2			
Take in consideration the farms' environmental performance	1			
Do the rural areas have an ecological advantage?	1			
Reduce the use of phytosanitary products	1			
A policy that assists farms' adjustment	7	3	4	4
Support to small and medium-sized farms	2			
Support to farm start-up and transfer	2			
Make the farms independent	2			
Increase the genetic potential of cereals	1			
What type of policy?	6	5	5	2
Simulate the impact of different types of support (coupled support, no price intervention, degressive support, regionalisation, etc.)	5			
What level of subsidiarity for the rural policies?	1			
What are the objectives of agriculture?	6	1	4	5
Help maintain diversified agriculture	3			
Interest of spreading production across the country	1			
How to achieve sustainable food independence	1			
What directions for the CAP in the globalised world?	1			
What is agriculture's place in the rural world?	4	0	2	6
What is agriculture's social role in the rural areas?	1			
What is the link between farmers and rural incomers?	1			
How is agriculture taken into account in the rural fabric?	1			
What is the efficient approach to supporting project initiators in rural areas?	1			

2.10. Question 10: How much emphasis should research place on the six main focuses of the CAP-IRE project?

Table 19 shows the average ranking scores for each main focus, and Table 20 lists specific proposals made by the experts for each main focus.

The most important focus for the Centre Region's experts concerns the interactions between agriculture and the other economic sectors in the rural areas (focus B, average score 2.6 out of 6): What is agriculture's place in the rural areas' economic activities?; What is the link between agriculture and the food industry?; What sales and alternative earnings strategies exist?. The second two important focuses (average scores of 2.8 and 2.9) are farm structural adjustment problems and problems related to the environment (focuses A and C). The Centre Region's experts consider the other three research focuses to be much less important: society and the rural world (average score of 3.9), types of governance (average score of 4.1) and interactions between rural and other areas (average score of 4.3).

At the meeting on 19 September, the experts approved the proposed ranking of these focuses, but asked for one slight alteration: to rank focuses A and C in joint second place whereas we had ranked them in second and third place respectively. The experts also added that it was hard to conduct research separately on focuses A, C and D, again stressing the importance of taking the three economic, environmental and social components into account.

Table 19: Ranking of the six CAP-IRE project research focuses by the Centre Region's experts

The six CAP-IRE project research focuses		Average of the priorities assigned by the experts	Ranking following debate
A	Farm structural adjustment, investment and innovation	2.8	2
B	Interactions between agriculture and other economic sectors in rural areas	2.6	1
C	Spatial dimension and environmental sustainability in rural areas	2.9	2
D	Society and the rural world	3.9	4
E	1- Interactions between rural and non-rural communities 2- Interactions between European rural areas and rural areas in the rest of the world	4.3	6
F	Suitable types of governance for rural areas	4.1	5

Table 20: Centre Region’s experts’ proposals for specific research on the six CAP-IRE project research focuses

The six CAP-IRE project research focuses	Specific research proposals made by the experts
<p>A Farm structural adjustment, investment and innovation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Balance between farm performance/economic contribution and environmental impact - Relations between competitiveness and “human-scale agriculture” - Farm risk and crisis management
<p>B Interactions between agriculture and other economic sectors in rural areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop short circuits - Link agricultural policy with food policy - Agriculture’s place in rural economic activities - Identification of emerging services
<p>C Spatial dimension and environmental sustainability in rural areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of failures of agriculture-related environmental policies - A successful balance between economic performance and ecological performance - What is agriculture’s contribution? - What tools to reduce environmental damage? - Resolving the fragmentation of the landscape/Consideration of land artificialisation
<p>D Society and the rural world</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to maintain local services - How agriculture can meet society’s needs - Increasing the standing of the profession of farmer
<p>E 1- Interactions between rural and non-rural communities; 2- Interactions between European rural areas and rural areas in the rest of the world</p>	<p>1-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approach rural life other than from the agricultural angle - Development of short circuits <p>2-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of the flows and impacts on employment - Evaluation of the effects of French agriculture on other countries’ farming - Development of AFDI (French Farmers and International Development, a national French NGO mainly supported by farmers and the main farmers’ union) types of partnerships
<p>F Suitable types of governance for rural areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simplification of the scales of intervention - Adaptation of governance to each specific area - Support to rural project initiators - What should the weight of rural policies be compared with urban development? - Consideration of non-agricultural players in rural policies

2.11. Question 11: Other comments

As regards the design of the questionnaire, two experts said the questions were sometimes hard to understand and some were hard to answer (e.g. Question 5). Another expert mentioned that questions 1 and 3 did not go far enough and that the question also needed to be put as to the main strengths and weaknesses of agriculture in the Region.

On the purpose of the questionnaire, one expert wrote that he was only answering it in the hope that this project would change the future CAP.

On the subject of the CAP-IRE project in general, one expert was surprised to see that research focus A was disconnected from research focus C.

On other points, one expert felt it important to emphasise the role of organic farming in tomorrow's agriculture. Another expert warned against considering agriculture solely for regional planning and landscape maintenance, which would only receive subsidies for this purpose. This expert felt that the other aspects of agriculture needed to be taken into account, such as the food and productive performance aspects and the question of farmers' incomes, incomes that would not be enough with second pillar payments alone. This question of income was also raised by an expert during a telephone conversation after the meeting of 19 September. The expert was concerned that the environmental issue might become more important than the stabilisation of agricultural income.

3. Reponses from the Midi-Pyrénées Region’s local expert committee

The classification and ranking tables shown below are not exactly those presented to the experts at the 8 October meeting. First of all, we have incorporated changes to certain category headings, content and rankings following the discussions on 8 October. The changes have been directly incorporated into the tables below, but our initial proposals can be found in the body of the text. Moreover, the tables have been slightly amended by one expert’s responses received after the meeting. These changes are marginal: the expert’s responses fitted in with the categories proposed for the meeting and the rankings remained unchanged, with the exception of Table 28 (Question 5b) and Table 36 (Question 10) where the first three items ranked have changed position (but have stayed in the first three places). The rankings for these questions are therefore proposals, and not rankings approved following the debate.

3.1. Question 1: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Midi-Pyrénées Region as a whole (rural and non-rural areas)?

There was not enough time to present this question to the meeting on 8 October. Consequently, our following proposals (Table 21 and Table 22) were unable to be discussed or approved by the experts.

a) Strengths

We have classed the Midi-Pyrénées Region’s strengths as proposed by the experts into four main categories (Table 21). The Region’s main strength, based on the total number of times it was mentioned in priority 1 and priority 1 or 2, is that it is a [hospitable region rich in wildlife](#) (mentioned 18 times, with 5 ranked priority 1), with an extremely diverse landscape, a pleasant climate, a rich natural heritage, wide open spaces, and a diversified agriculture. The region’s second main strength is that it is [buoyant and cutting edge](#) (mentioned 12 times, with 3 ranked priority 1), due mainly to the Toulouse area, the positive balance of migration and the presence of the aeronautics industry. The third strength is that the region boasts [tourism appeal](#) (mentioned 9 times, with 2 in priority 1). It has a good image, a rich cultural heritage and strong cultural vitality (with festivals, etc.). It enjoys culinary repute due to its high-quality production and PDOs. Note that the strength ranked number one (rich in wildlife and hospitable) could be included in the tourism appeal strength. Lastly, the fourth strength (mentioned 6 times, but never in priority 1 or 2) is that the region is [well located](#) between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean and close to Spain, which is conducive to trade and tourist flows.

Table 21: The experts’ opinions on the Midi-Pyrénées Region’s main strengths

	In the experts’ responses:			Our ranking proposal
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Diversity of landscape and countryside	5			
Pleasant climate	4			
Rich natural heritage	4			
Wide open spaces	3			
Agricultural diversity	2			
→ A hospitable region rich in wildlife	18	5	10	1

Toulouse (jobs, airport, etc.)	3			
Demographic vitality	3			
Social vitality	1			
Technological drive	4			
Education and research	1			
→ A buoyant, cutting-edge region	12	3	5	2
Region's good image	3			
Heritage and cultural vitality	3			
Culinary repute	3			
→ A region with tourism appeal	9	2	3	3
Interface between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic	3			
Border with Spain	3			
→ A well-located region	6	0	0	4

b) Weaknesses

We ranked the Midi-Pyrénées Region's main weaknesses into five main categories based on the experts' responses (Table 22). Toulouse emerges as the Region's main problem, as it attracts all the business and people: **a region concentrated in and around Toulouse** was mentioned as a weakness by 11 experts (8 of whom ranked it priority 1 or 2). The second main weakness raised by the experts (mentioned 8 times, with 2 ranked priority 1) is that the **region is largely isolated**: no high-speed train link, major roads or tunnel to Spain; and remote from Paris, the Rhone valley and Europe. The third main problem concerns the rural areas only: **a region with rural areas experiencing difficulties** was mentioned 7 times. These difficulties concern land-use and neighbour conflicts (between farmers, rural dwellers, rural incomers and foreigners settling in rural areas), demographic decline and the disappearance of public services. In fourth place is **a region with agricultural and industrial activities at risk**: three experts felt that agriculture is vulnerable and three others felt that the industrial sector is underdeveloped. The fifth weakness is **a physically heterogeneous region** (mentioned 5 times in total).

Table 22: The experts' opinions on the Midi-Pyrénées Region's main weaknesses

	In the experts' responses:			Our ranking proposal
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Toulouse, the main centre of attraction	6			
Few large towns aside from Toulouse	2			
Major urbanisation of Toulouse with the depopulation of the region's hinterland	3			
→ A region concentrated in and around Toulouse	11	4	8	1
Isolated region	5			
Underdeveloped public transport	2			
Far from major commercial centres	1			
→ A region largely isolated	8	2	4	2

Land-use and neighbour conflicts in rural areas	2			
Demographic decline in rural areas	2			
Disappearance of public services in rural areas	3			
→ A region with rural areas experiencing difficulties	7	1	3	3
Vulnerable agricultural sector	3			
Weak industrial sector	3			
→ A region with agricultural and industrial activities at risk	6	1	1	4
Areas with handicaps, difficult areas and areas subject to natural disasters	3			
Heterogeneous water quality and quantity	2			
→ A physically heterogeneous region	5	1	1	5

3.2. Question 2: How would you define a rural area?

In their answers to the questionnaire, a number of experts (7 in total) defined a rural area as a zone where agriculture and forestry predominate in terms of land use and economic activity (Table 23). The classic definitions of a large place taken by nature, low population density and remoteness from services were also mentioned. Two experts proposed an original definition: rural areas are by definition dynamic environments with strong mobilisation and organisational capacities.

Table 23: How the Midi-Pyrénées Region’s experts define a rural area

	Number of times mentioned in the experts’ responses
Predominance of agricultural and forestry activities in land use and economic activity	7
Large place taken by nature/countryside	2
Low population density	3
Remote from services	1
Dynamic environment	2

3.3. Question 3: What are currently the main strengths and weaknesses of the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region?

a) Strengths

As shown by Table 24, the number one strength of the Midi-Pyrénées Region’s rural areas identified by the experts in their responses to the questionnaire concerns farming. [Agriculture is diversified and high quality](#) (mentioned 15 times, with 5 ranked priority 1) due mainly to cutting-edge farms, abundant water resources and quality labels. The second strength is the [rural areas’ strong power of attraction](#) (mentioned 12 times, with 3 ranked priority 1), due mainly to pleasant natural and living conditions and a rich heritage. The [quality and diversity of the landscape and rich biodiversity](#) is the third main strength in order of importance (mentioned 9 times). Our fourth and last proposed strength based on the experts’ responses is [certain generally well-served rural areas](#) due to the strong presence of infrastructures and

towns. The first three strengths are by far the most important from the point of view of the number of times they were mentioned and their priority rankings. They reflect the strong position of agriculture and the natural habitat in the Region's rural areas.

At the meeting on 8 October, certain experts pointed out that NICT equipment was not so common in the rural areas and that this imbalance isolated the farmers. Other experts were surprised at the fourth strength's heading ("generally well-served rural areas"). Following the debate, therefore, we added into the headings that the NICT equipment and good service only applied to certain rural areas. It was also suggested that Toulouse was not necessarily a strength for the rural areas, especially the suburban areas, but more of a weakness due to the urban spread around the city and its concentration of services and infrastructures. Since this aspect is clearly pointed up in the following question (Table 25), we have not deleted it from the strengths. Some experts also asked for the heading of the strength ranked in third place to include the notion of rich biodiversity, which did not appear in our initial proposal.

Table 24: The experts' opinions on the main strengths of the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region

	In the experts' responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Agricultural diversity	6			
Water resources	2			
Many and cutting-edge farms	2			
Quality labels and traditional produce	5			
→ Diversified, high-quality agriculture	15	5	8	1
The rural areas' tourism potential and appeal	7			
Peace and quiet, quality of life	4			
Pleasant climate	1			
→ The rural areas' strong power of attraction	12	3	9	2
Beauty and diversity of the landscape and countryside	7			
Preserved landscape	1			
Varied climates	1			
→ Quality and diversity of the landscape; rich biodiversity	9	4	5	3
Public infrastructures	2			
Presence of many middle-sized towns	1			
Presence of Toulouse	1			
Reduction in the imbalance between Toulouse and rural areas	1			
NICT equipment in certain areas	1			
→ Certain generally well-served rural areas	6	0	0	4

b) Weaknesses

As shown by Table 25, the main weakness of the Region’s rural areas is the **deterioration of the socio-economic fabric**, with a demographic slowdown and the disappearance of services (mentioned 17 times, with 7 ranked priority 1 or 2). The second major weakness raised by many of the experts (mentioned 13 times, with 7 ranked priority 1 or 2) is an **ailing agricultural sector** due mainly to a downturn in activity and agricultural employment and the decentralisation of the food industry’s decision-making centres, but also to growing pressures on the environment. In their responses, the experts placed less importance on the other weaknesses that we have ranked in third, fourth and fifth place. The third weakness is the increase in **land-use and neighbour conflicts** among the different players in the rural areas (farmers, non-agricultural rural dwellers and rural incomers). The fourth is the problem of **isolation** (mentioned by 5 experts) and the fifth is the **lack of regional identity** with a low regional profile and few common interests (although this is offset by strong local identities).

At the meeting on 8 October, certain experts suggested changing the heading of the number one weakness we initially proposed (“deterioration of the social fabric”) to “deterioration of the socio-economic fabric”, and changing the number three weakness (“neighbour conflicts”) to “land-use and neighbour conflicts”. Lastly, one expert proposed incorporating this problem into the ailing agricultural sector weakness, but this was not approved by the other experts. Moreover, although only two experts mentioned the regional identity issue in their written answers, a number of experts raised this point at the 8 October meeting. They put forward, for example, that the Pyrenees has an identity, not the Region itself. The experts also wanted to qualify the lack of dynamism among the population raised by one expert in answer to the questionnaire. They pointed out that associations were highly developed in the rural areas and that cultural activities (festivals and markets) were also widespread. One expert questioned the weakness of low population renewal on the basis of recent official figures. Nevertheless, the proposed ranking remained.

Table 25: The experts’ opinions on the main weaknesses of the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Population ageing, depopulation, low rate of renewal	7			
Disappearance of services and loss of economic activities	8			
Lack of dynamism among the population	1			
Little solidarity	1			
→ Deterioration of the socio-economic fabric	17	5	7	1
Downturn in agriculture in certain areas	4			
Loss of agricultural labour force	2			
Pressures on the environment (water and biodiversity)	2			
Absence of food industry and collection and processing facilities	1			
Lack of competitiveness and poor farm viability	4			
→ Ailing agricultural sector	13	2	7	2

Urban spread and real estate pressure Problem with farmers, rural dwellers and rural incomers living side by side → Land-use and neighbour conflicts	5 2 7	3	5	3
Isolation, underdeveloped transport infrastructures → Isolation	5 5	2	3	4
Lack of regional identity Tourism aimed mainly at winter sports → Lack of regional identity	4 2 2	0	1	5

3.4. Question 4: What other weaknesses could emerge in the Midi-Pyrénées Region rural areas in the next ten years?

Table 26 presents the other weaknesses envisaged by the experts in their written responses. They are classed into five main categories. The first is the [weakening of agriculture, exacerbated in areas experiencing difficulties](#) (mentioned 10 times, with 6 ranked priority 1). The second is the [continued deterioration of the socio-economic fabric](#) (mentioned 8 times, with 4 ranked priority 1). The order is therefore inversed compared with the current weaknesses (Table 25). The third other weakness, which is new compared with the current problems, covers potential agriculture-related issues (PDOs, GMOs and climate instability). We have summed these up as the [need to define new strategies for the farms](#). The fourth weakness is the heightening of the [land-use and neighbour conflicts](#) problem. The fifth weakness concerns [agricultural pressures on the environment](#). We have chosen to separate it out from the agricultural weaknesses, unlike in Question 3 (Table 25).

At the meeting on 8 October, certain experts suggested that the decrease in the number of farms was not necessarily a problem specific to the region and that it was a classic development found throughout France. Most of the experts approved the headings for the five main weaknesses, but pointed out that certain sub-issues were missing from these categories. Examples given were the disappearance of food industry businesses (in the weakness ranked 1, “weakening of agriculture, exacerbated in areas experiencing difficulties”), the loss of biodiversity (in the weakness ranked 5, “agricultural pressures on the environment”) associated with both agriculture and urbanisation, the disappearance of craft trades (in the weakness ranked 2, “continued deterioration of the socio-economic fabric”), and pluriactivity of farmers (in the weakness ranked 3, “need to define new strategies for the farms”).

Table 26: The experts’ opinions on the main potential additional weaknesses in the Midi-Pyrénées Region’s rural areas

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Loss of agricultural labour force, few new farm set-ups	5			
Decrease in the number of farms	2			
Decline in agriculture in mountainous areas	2			
Impoverishment of farmers	1			

Disappearance of food industry businesses → Weakening of agriculture, exacerbated in areas experiencing difficulties	10	6	8	1
Disappearance of services and loss of economic activities Housing and transport problems Loss of labour force Little cohesion in rural areas Disappearance of craft trades → Continued deterioration of the socio-economic fabric	4 2 1 1 8			
		4	6	2
PDOs endangered Prevention of incidents due to climate instability (water storage, etc.) GMO issue Increased production constraints Pluriactivity of farmers → Need to define new strategies for the farms	2 1 1 1 5			
		1	3	3
Urbanisation (agricultural area loss) Problem with farmers/rural dwellers/rural incomers living side by side Competition between water for town dwellers and water for agriculture → Land-use and neighbour conflicts	3 1 1 5			
		1	3	4
Pressures on water resources Deterioration of the landscape Loss of biodiversity → Agricultural pressures on the environment	1 1 2			
		0	1	5

3.5. Question 5: What does the agricultural sector contribute to the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region?

a) What does agriculture as a whole contribute?

We have grouped the contributions proposed by the experts in their written responses into six main contributions (Table 27). Ranking them was problematic as, with the exception of the contribution we have ranked in sixth place, all the contributions were relatively close in terms of the number of times they were mentioned in priority 1 and in priority 1 or 2.

We have therefore proposed [economic activity](#) and [employment](#) as agriculture's two main contributions to the rural areas of the Midi-Pyrénées Region. However, these are closely followed by [landscape maintenance and creation, and environmental protection](#). This contribution was mentioned the most by the experts in their responses, yet was only ranked twice in priority 1. The fourth contribution is the [sustained social fabric and population](#),

mentioned just three times, but all in priority 1 or 2. The [diversified, high-quality food supply](#) is the fifth main contribution with 5 mentions, two of which were ranked priority 1 or 2. The last contribution, mentioned five times with none in priority 1, is [tourism appeal](#).

The experts approved this ranking at the meeting on 8 October.

Table 27: The experts’ opinions on the main contributions of agriculture to the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Diversified, high-quality food supply	5	1	2	5
Economic activity	7	2	6	1
Employment	5	4	5	2
Landscape maintenance and creation, and environmental protection	9	2	5	3
Tourism appeal	5	0	1	6
Sustained social fabric and population	3	2	3	4

b) What do the farms contribute?

As shown by Table 28, the farms’ main contribution to the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region is to [sustain the rural fabric](#) (mentioned 8 times in total, with 4 ranked priority 1). This covers sustaining the population, social relations and heritage, even before the contribution of [employment, economic activities and tourism](#) (mentioned 8 times, but only once in priority 1). The farms’ third main contribution is [the use, maintenance and preservation of the countryside and the environment](#) (mentioned 5 times, all ranked priority 1 or 2). This item also includes landscape creation. The [bridge between town and countryside](#) is the fourth contribution made by the farms: farmers forge the link between the urban population and the countryside, and offer their services to the municipalities (recycling sewage sludge, snow clearing, etc.). Lastly, a [high-quality local food supply](#) (based mainly on short circuits) is ranked last with just two mentions.

This ranking has changed slightly from the ranking presented to the meeting on 8 October, following the inclusion of answers to the questionnaire received after the meeting. Before this change, the ranking based on the number of times contributions were mentioned was as follows: in first place, the contribution to “employment, economic activity and tourism”; in second place, the contribution to “the use, maintenance and preservation of the countryside and the environment”; and in third place, the contribution to “sustaining the rural fabric”.

Table 28: The experts' opinions on the main contributions of the farms to the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region

	In the experts' responses:			Our ranking proposal
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Employment, economic activity, tourism	8	1	5	2
Sustaining the rural fabric	8	4	6	1
<i>Participation in local life and social relations</i>				
<i>Sustained demography</i>				
<i>Cultural heritage preservation</i>				
Use, maintenance and preservation of the countryside and the environment	5	3	5	3
Bridge between town and countryside	3	1	2	4
High-quality local food supply	2	1	1	5

c) What do the rural areas' agriculture-related businesses (food industry, co-operatives, vets, mechanics, slaughterhouses, etc.) contribute?

Table 29 shows that the main contribution of the businesses connected with the rural areas is by far the contribution to **employment** (mentioned 9 times, with 8 ranked priority 1). **Economic activity** (mentioned 5 times) and **production and income support** (mentioned 4 times) (via sector structuring, sales support and lower production costs) come in second and third place. Lastly, three experts felt that the agriculture-related businesses **contribute to the rural fabric** and **provide local services**.

Table 29: The experts' opinions on the main contributions of rural area agriculture-related businesses to the Midi-Pyrénées Region's rural areas

	In the experts' responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
Employment	9	8	9	1
Economic activity	5	2	5	2
Production and income support	4	1	2	3
Contribution to the rural fabric	3	0	2	4
Services	3	0	1	5

3.6. Question 6: How will these contributions change in the next ten years?

a) How will the contributions of agriculture as a whole change?

One expert posited that agriculture's contributions to the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region would **not change** in the next ten years. One expert felt that **change is uncertain** and will depend on the objectives assigned to agriculture and hence on the policies (Table 30). Three experts forecast a **decrease in the importance of agriculture and consequently of all its contributions** in the next ten years. Three experts predicted that we will see a **shift in agriculture's production functions**, with a decrease in the food function and, for example, the participation of farmers in energy generation. Lastly, two experts suggested that agriculture will see an **increase in its role in the rural world**.

At the meeting on 8 October, the experts added that agriculture's contribution in absolute value might stay the same, but that its relative contribution compared with other sectors would decrease.

Table 30: The experts' opinions on changes to agriculture's main contributions to the Midi-Pyrénées Region's rural areas

	Number of times mentioned in the experts' responses
No change	
No change in the contributions	1
Uncertain change	
Depends on the objectives assigned to agriculture in the Region	1
Decrease in the importance of agriculture and of its contributions	
Decrease in all contributions	1
Decrease in the economic importance of agriculture	1
Decrease in livestock farming, and hence workers, production, wealth, landscape	1
Shift in agriculture's production functions	
Development of short circuits	1
Participation of farmers in energy generation	1
Production organisation steered upstream	1
Increase in the role of agriculture in the rural world	
Increase in the importance of the farmer's role in the maintenance of the countryside and the environment	1
Participation in the improvement of the "hospitable region" image	1

b) How will the farms' contributions change?

The experts' written responses to how the farms' contributions might change in the next ten years all concurred that they would make [less of a contribution to the maintenance and vitality of the rural fabric](#), due mainly to the decrease in the number of farms. They also thought we would see a [weakening of areas with handicaps](#) (Table 31).

Table 31: The experts' opinions on changes to the farms' main contributions to the Midi-Pyrénées Region's rural areas

	Number of times mentioned in the experts' responses
Less of a contribution to the maintenance and vitality of the rural fabric and Weakening of areas with handicaps	
Decrease in contribution to rural areas due to increased specialisation and shrinking numbers of workers	2
Decline in agriculture resulting in reduced land use and a cultural loss	1
Negative impact on the whole industry due to shrinking agricultural employment	1
Disappearance of certain marginalised areas	1
Reduction in the structuring role of the rural areas	1
Widening of the divide between rural dwellers and rural incomers	1

c) How will the contributions of the rural areas' agriculture-related businesses (food industry, co-operatives, vets, mechanics, slaughterhouses, etc.) change?

As with agriculture as a whole and the farms themselves, the experts envisage that the agriculture-related businesses will see a **reduction in their contribution to employment and the decentralisation of value-added** (Table 32). Three of the experts also think that these businesses will play more of a part in technical and quality assistance to producers. We have summed up this point as a **shift in their role towards greater dependence by the agricultural sector**.

Table 32: The experts' opinions on changes to the main contributions of rural area agriculture-related businesses to the Midi-Pyrénées Region's rural areas

	Number of times mentioned in the experts' responses
Decrease in their contribution to employment and decentralisation of value-added	
Decrease in their contribution due to a decline in agriculture	1
Decrease in employment as businesses merge	1
Flight of value-added out of the region due to outsourcing	1
Shift in their role towards greater dependence by the agricultural sector	
Preservation of the food industry businesses' role as they merge	1
Greater involvement in technical assistance to producers	1
Quality concern	1

3.7. Question 7: What are the major effects of the CAP (1st and 2nd pillars) on the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region?

Table 33 presents the CAP's major effects on the Midi-Pyrénées Region's rural areas as proposed by the experts. We have grouped them into major categories under the headings of positive and negative effects. The first effect is a negative effect: the **weakening of the agricultural sector and increased pressures on the environment** with, in particular, the decrease in the number of farmers, and environmental damage (mentioned 16 times). The second and third effects are positive. They are **sustained agricultural activity** (mentioned 8 times) and the **preservation/improvement of the rural fabric** (mentioned 5 times). The fourth effect, which we have called **the introduction of new practices**, was mentioned by three experts. Lastly, one expert spoke of unfair subsidies in the eyes of the rest of society. We have called this more generally a **widening lack of understanding between agriculture and the rest of society**.

At the meeting on 8 October, the experts reported that they had found it hard to answer this question as they did not know what to compare the effects with: if the benchmark is no CAP, it is impossible to imagine what the rural areas would be like without it. For example, the agricultural specialisation of certain areas could be due to other factors than the CAP. Basically, the CAP is not the only factor responsible for changes in agriculture. However, it has sustained some sectors and developed others, albeit without slowing the weakening of the agricultural sector as a whole.

The experts then said they were not sure about some of the positive and negative effect classifications (e.g. certain environmental effects are positive) and that it would have been better to put the question separately: what are the positive effects of the CAP and what are the negative effects of the CAP? They also raised the point that most of the effects apply to certain areas only, and that the situation in the south of the region was substantially different to the situation in the north. Moreover, they felt that the CAP had not necessarily sustained

diversified agriculture, but that it had wiped it out in certain places. Nevertheless, the experts approved all of our proposals, with the exception of the ranking of one group of effects. The general consensus was that we should change our ranking proposal by putting “sustained agricultural activity” up one place (from the initially proposed third place to second place); the experts felt that this was true in particular up to the 1992 reform.

Table 33: The experts’ opinions on the major effects of the CAP on the rural areas in the Midi-Pyrénées Region

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
POSITIVE EFFECTS				
Sustained agricultural activity, especially in certain areas	3			
Sustained diversified agriculture	3			
Sustained farm viability	2			
→ Sustained agricultural activity	8	2	4	2
Sustained population and jobs	3			
Support for new activities (diversification and tourism)	2			
→ Preservation/improvement of the rural fabric	5	2	3	3
More environmentally-friendly farming practices	2			
Adaptation of agricultural and food activities	1			
→ Introduction of new farming practices	3	1	2	4
NEGATIVE EFFECTS				
Decrease in the number of farms, new farm set-up difficulties	4			
Environmental damage (biodiversity and soil deterioration)	4			
Agricultural specialisation of certain areas	2			
Agricultural downturn in certain areas and crisis in unsubsidised production	2			
Farm dependency and vulnerability	2			
Farmers becoming individualistic	1			
Land pressures	1			
→ Weakening of the agricultural sector and increased pressures on the environment	16	6	10	1
Unfair subsidies in the eyes of the rest of society	1			
→ Widening lack of understanding between agriculture and the rest of society	1	0	1	5

3.8. Question 8: How do you think the role of the CAP (1st and 2nd pillars) will change in the next ten years?

Table 34 shows that six experts envisage a decrease in subsidies or the disappearance of the CAP. Four experts think the CAP will become dual purpose (targeting both food production and rural development). We proposed summing up the answers as [a policy with a food purpose, but also a policy in response to social demand](#).

At the 8 October meeting, the experts added that the policy would probably become rural and no longer agricultural, and therefore the other rural players needed to be taken into account.

Table 34: The Midi-Pyrénées Region’s experts’ opinions on the potential change in the role of CAP

	Number of times mentioned in the experts’ responses
Decrease in subsidies, disappearance of the CAP, less regulatory CAP	6
Dual-purpose CAP (productive agriculture versus landscape maintenance agriculture and agriculture that sustains activities in rural areas)	4
Production maintained to meet food security and non-food needs	3
Increase in environmental considerations	3
The other rural stakeholders will receive subsidies	1
Nationwide spread of production	1
→ A policy with a food purpose	
→ A policy in response to social demand	

3.9. Question 9: What subjects call for a research focus to help define the future CAP?

We classed the experts’ answers on research focuses into two categories (Table 35): one category by policy purpose and one category by type of policy. The [policy purpose](#) category shows that the experts would like to know how to [tailor the policy to the needs of the territories, the environment and society](#), i.e. how to foster the multifunctional nature of agriculture and demonstrate the utility of keeping the farmers in place.

As regards [policy type](#), some experts at the 8 October meeting put forward the need for research into the best level for policy implementation (regions, territory, etc.) and a better understanding of the market mechanisms. We have added these points into the type of policy classification. The experts also pointed out that research should not be purely economic, but should in particular look into new technologies, for example concerning the use of inputs. They felt that CAP subsidies would eventually no longer have any role to play. Moreover, they thought that studies on the most suitable type of policy should take into account the needs of the territories, the environment and society, i.e. that the two research subject categories should not be separated.

In any case, the experts were unanimous as to the need to co-ordinate CAP research by INRA as they felt they were being solicited from all sides without being able to see a link between the different demands.

Table 35: The Midi-Pyrénées Region’s experts’ opinions on subjects that call for a research focus

	In the experts’ responses:			Ranking following debate
	Total number of times mentioned	Number of times ranked Priority 1	Number of times ranked Priority 1 or 2	
How to tailor the policy to the needs of the territories, the environment and society				
Maintain the number of farmers (effect of a decrease on the environment; transfer assistance; structural assistance; income support)	6	1	4	3
Maintain high-quality production	4	2	3	2
Greater consideration of the environment	4	1	4	4
Spatial distribution of activities	2	2	2	5
Take into account the three pillars at the same time (multifunctionality)	3	1	2	6
What type of policy				
Simulations and forecasts of the impact of different types of policies (withdrawal of the CAP; support prices, withdrawal of agriculture from the WTO; level of policy implementation; market mechanisms)	4	3	3	1

3.10. Question 10: How much emphasis should research place on the six main focuses of the CAP-IRE project?

Table 36 shows the average of the ranks (from 1 to 6, with 1 being the most important) given by each expert to the six CAP-IRE project research focuses. Table 37 lists the more specific research proposals made by the experts for each focus.

In first place (with an average score of 2.5) comes the research focus on the interactions between agriculture and the other economic sectors in rural areas. This is closely followed by the spatial dimension and environmental sustainability in rural areas (average score of 2.6), and by farm structural adjustment, investment and innovation (average score of 2.7). There is a clear dividing line between the first three research focuses (average scores of 2.5 to 2.7) and the last three research focuses (average scores of 4.2 to 4.6). The experts considered these latter focuses to be of minor importance compared with the first three.

The ranking of the first three focuses differs from that presented to the meeting on 8 October, since one expert’s questionnaire responses were received after the meeting. Before the inclusion of these additional responses, focus A was ranked number one, and focuses B and C were ranked joint second place. Considering the approval of the ranking presented to the meeting by the experts present, and given that the average scores are not very different, we have ranked focus B number one and the two focuses A and C in second place.

Table 36: Ranking of the six CAP-IRE project research focuses by the Midi-Pyrénées Region's experts

The six CAP-IRE project research focuses	Average of the priorities assigned by the experts	Our ranking proposal
A Farm structural adjustment, investment and innovation	2.7	2
B Interactions between agriculture and other economic sectors in rural areas	2.5	1
C Spatial dimension and environmental sustainability in rural areas	2.6	2
D Society and the rural world	4.2	4
E 1- Interactions between rural and non-rural communities 2- Interactions between European rural areas and rural areas in the rest of the world	4.6	6
F Suitable types of governance for rural areas	4.3	5

Table 37: Midi-Pyrénées Region expert proposals for specific research on the six CAP-IRE project research focuses

The six CAP-IRE project research focuses	Specific research proposals made by the experts
A Farm structural adjustment, investment and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to sustain farm viability - How to assist the farms with their restructuring - Develop technologies for a better use of natural resources - Redefine the roles and missions of the co-operatives
B Interactions between agriculture and other economic sectors in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture's place and role in rural economic activities - Synergies between agriculture and tourism - Complementarities between agriculture and the other economic sectors in rural areas

<p>C Spatial dimension and environmental sustainability in rural areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of intensive farming on natural species - Recommended or imposed policies more grounded in environmental considerations - How to balance economic profitability with environmental concerns - How to promote even more environmentally-friendly practices to farmers
<p>D Society and the rural world</p>	<p>How to improve the relationship between farmers and the rest of society (consumers, rural incomers, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Renew dialogue and build good communication - Communicate about the positive aspects of agriculture - Promote farming to young people - Explain the issues involved in agriculture
<p>E 1- Interactions between rural and non-rural communities; 2- Interactions between European rural areas and rural areas in the rest of the world</p>	<p>1-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop short circuits - Issues involved in suburban agriculture (pollution, land-use conflicts, etc.) <p>2-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of biofuels on a world scale - The risks of global food dependency
<p>F Suitable types of governance for rural areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tailoring of governance to local particularities - Choices of scales of action and forms of co-ordination - The role of farmers in decision-making bodies

3.11. Question 11: Other comments

Just one expert added a comment on a point missing from the questionnaire. This expert felt that the issue of biofuels, especially their impact, should form the subject of in-depth research.

4. Conclusion

We thank all the experts for their voluntary, and generally highly detailed, contribution to this first stage of the European CAP-IRE research project. We are grateful to them for taking the time to answer the questionnaire and join the discussions at the meetings in Orléans on 19 September (for the Centre Region local committee) and in Toulouse on 8 October (for the Midi-Pyrénées Region local committee). As researchers, we have learnt a great deal from reading and listening to their points of view on the rural areas and the CAP. This has given us a better grasp of the ins and outs of the different issues involved in agriculture and the rural areas in general. It has also raised the point that INRA's work tends not to be made widely available to agricultural and rural stakeholders.

Although the main purpose of setting up these local expert committees was to cast a different light on agricultural and rural society issues, different to the research world's view, a secondary objective was to bring together all the rural stakeholders on neutral ground. This secondary goal was only partially achieved, since certain players did not wish to take part in the CAP-IRE project's work and discussions. The composition of the committees shows that the players who feel the most concerned are the agricultural stakeholders, the environmental stakeholders and the institutional players. We contacted representatives of agricultural collection and processing businesses, and also the tourism sector, but to no avail.

This first stage of the CAP-IRE project shows that the two Regions have similar general characteristics. They boast territorial diversity, tourism potential and they are pleasant to live in. However, they lack regional identity and a unified territorial and land development policy within the region, and they suffer from a low profile outside of the region. Yet whereas the Midi-Pyrénées Region's experts often stressed the imbalance created by the main city of Toulouse, the Centre Region's experts felt that the region suffered from the opposite problem of not having a regional capital and having a number of middle-sized towns competing with one another. In both regions, the lack of regional identity and regional planning is striking, whereas the reverse could be expected of the Midi-Pyrénées Region due to Toulouse and its economic and cultural influence. A major constraint is the wide diversity of rural areas in both Regions. This diversity clearly emerges from the experts' different answers on economic isolation and buoyancy.

Both Regions' rural areas are identified mainly with agricultural activity, both in terms of their definition and their main asset. Despite their efforts, the experts find it hard to separate out rural life, agriculture and the CAP. Yet neither European policy (the CAP's pillar that is incongruously named "rural development" pillar) nor this question encourages them to do so. However, agriculture represents a minor and even minimal economic and demographic weight in the rural areas. So it is not with its falling economic and demographic weight that agriculture is going to influence the future of the rural areas. Its real impact is found in the use of the land and natural resources.

Most of the rural areas' problems are found in both Regions: general social change problems (which seem stronger in the Centre Region), but also agricultural and environmental problems. The experts of these two Regions do not appear to feel that the demographic and economic regeneration movement (since 1990) in intermediate rural areas in France has had any direct effects, except possibly in the form of land-use conflicts due to claims on the land by non-agricultural residents and the highlighting of rural areas experiencing difficulties compared with others. The increasing urbanisation of rural areas (especially suburbs and green belts) has given rise to many land-use conflicts, which need to be considered when designing policies. The two Regions also have to contend with the flight of their agricultural

production's value-added and the relocation of the decision-making centres for the main food industries present. This further depresses the primary sector in areas with otherwise good production capacities (qualitatively and quantitatively). In addition, environmental problems such as pressure on the water supply and pressure on biodiversity are future issues of which all the groups of stakeholders in the committees are aware.

The experts' responses show that many of the rural areas' problems are similar to the negative effects attributed to the CAP. However, the experts realise that it would be a sweeping generalisation to hold the agricultural policy alone responsible for these effects. The rural areas are confronted with a certain number of changes and transformations, which need to be properly detailed if effects harmful to the harmonious development of these regions (and more generally all the rural areas) are to be curbed in the future. Yet the fact remains that it is hard to imagine agriculture without the CAP, as a number of experts pointed out. Over and above the confusion between agriculture and the CAP, or more specifically the confusion between the effects of changes in agriculture and the effects of a CAP that is itself changing, neither the role nor the intentions of the CAP are clearly perceived. The CAP is not transparent and its specific effects are obscure. Has it stepped up or slowed down the loss of employment in the agricultural sector? Has it exacerbated environmental damage? For the time being, there are no clear answers to these questions and research is called for in these areas.

However, the two Regions' experts are aware of and relatively unanimous about the future of the CAP: towards stronger national and environmental components. The future CAP is seen in a relatively similar way by the experts of the two Regions, regardless of their sector: an increasingly nationalised policy and a decreasingly agricultural policy targeted more on rural development and especially the environment. On this subject, we pass on here the concerns of the agricultural stakeholders, who fear they will be forced to become mere "park keepers" without any real consideration for their income and their primary function of food production.

Alongside the work on collecting and comparing the local committee experts' opinions in their written contributions and at the meetings of 19 September and 8 October, the CAP-IRE project contacted one national player per partner country (in France, a representative of the Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries) to find out about the government's view of the CAP's influence on the rural areas. The ultimate objective of this is to bring institutional and political responses to the grass roots issues identified in the regions covered by the project.