

## **The geographical renaissance in the transition of the European agricultural policy from the sectorial to the territorial model**

### *The new era of European agriculture*

In Italy and in Europe, maybe all over the Western World, the third agricultural revolution has started. Following the first revolution man had abandoned pastoral nomadism and had settled on cultivated fields; during the second he had learnt how to overcome the physical obstacles of the natural environment, first by adopting production techniques that took into account biological and/or seasonal rhythms – crop rotation and association of cultivation to cattle breeding – then, as of the XXth century, by introducing mechanical, chemical, electronic and genetic innovations. These became increasingly sophisticated so that they made it possible for agriculture not to be conditioned by climatic and morphologic factors.

Paradoxically the overcoming of the obstacles of the natural environment laid the basis for the third agricultural revolution. In the last few decades the weight of political factors has become heavier than that of the physical-natural environment; at present, as a matter of fact, the first ones are responsible not only for markets, choices and re-conversion of cultivations, but also for the functional organization of farms, the design of the rural landscape and the development of the regional territories. And the rediscovery of the value of the environmental and cultural assets of the single regions is subject to measures and incentivating plans developed at international level and implemented at regional and local level.

It is therefore necessary to start talking about the sustainability of the agricultural systems in relation to the physical-biological balances of the natural environment and to the weight of the many reforms of the agricultural policy. Moreover the new forms of rurality and the recent EU agricultural policies must find a new geography ready for them, capable of measuring the social and environmental sustainability of the reforms underway and of evaluating the impact of the interventions on a regional and local scale.

In the countryside in the Western countries, it is far too evident that the implementation of some regulations played a key role in the development of the primary sector and the marginalization of some regional areas. This implementation has resulted not only in the adoption of homologising cultivations – often unknown to local agricultural traditions – but also in the spreading of and in priority being given by the farmers of the Mediterranean countries to the production models typical of North-Atlantic Europe.

On a global scale the three phases of the implementation of the community agricultural policy (incentives to increase competition and productivity; price support policy and set-aside policy) show a common denominator and an awareness acquired on the “field”. The common denominator is the “myth” of a large, efficient and competitive farm which can control the market and make the same profits as those made in other economic sectors. And the incentives to mechanization and increase in productivity –given in the first decade of the implementation of the Community Agricultural Policy (1960s) – and to support the price of excess products – given in the second phase – were destined to this type of production unit. On the contrary, the maturity of the most recent decisions appears as the principle of the integration of the primary sector in the global economic development of the territory has been asserting itself, starting from the end of the Eighties. This principle already inspired the Treaty of Rome (1957) and was weakly but effectively implemented only with the structural policies and with the Mediterranean integrated programmes.

For at least ten years, however, there were scanty resources for new measures of intervention which, at the same time, were not very incisive as well, so much so that at the beginning of the Nineties the *set-aside* reform – proposed by the Irish Mac Sharry – still seemed to be aimed at big farms. These were asked to let yearly cultivations rest in order to restore the agronomic properties of the soils and especially to limit excess production against the market demand. Paradoxically this is the suggestion made by Pliny in his *Naturalis historia*, where he invited the farmers to “sow less and plough better”. But whereas Pliny saw the greater commitment by farmers as the right way to achieve larger production, the set aside aims at reducing it. Moreover, whereas the price-support policy raised problems in international business relationships between Europe and the USA, the set aside raises ethical problems towards society and the developing countries where people are still starving. In both cases, then, problems depend on globalization.

On a regional and local scale the three phases of the implementation of the Community Agricultural Policy show many problematic effects as well. If in the past two factors contributed to the widening of cultivated areas and farm network – environmental obstacles (marshes and hills) and the size of historical estates – in the last decades of the XXth century a similar process started with the implementation of communitarian policies on a local scale. The increase in number and size of big farms in the plains – where environmental conditions encourage agricultural mechanized exploitation – was usually linked to a weakening of production, the result of the adoption of yearly monocultures, and to desertification caused by winds in increasingly larger fields where no trees grow. On the contrary and paradoxically, the same policies ask smaller farms to safeguard rural marginal areas – against areas where agriculture is strong – where they should commit themselves to protect the natural environment from deterioration and abandonment.

Actually the most recent reforms on agricultural policy reveal a new attention for the problems of the environment and they seem to be willing to amend the above mentioned results by strengthening the territorial model of the structural funds policy and involving local communities directly. This is the reason why the basis for the third agricultural revolution lay in the rediscovery of the value of environmental obstacles and rhythms and of the solutions found by each local community to overcome them.

### *The agricultural geography between the global and the regional problems*

There has started then the revival of an idea of the environment which goes beyond the present and, under a perspective intergenerational view, looks at the safeguard of natural potentialities and resources and at the health of farmers and consumers. A new space-time relationship has started.

A new era has started for agriculture, a great revolution is underway in the primary sector which discovered the problems of sustainability and is moving towards a new era, unknown to the operators of just a generation ago. I would define it the *era of perspective knowledge*: this is the era which opened the local to the planetary scale and brought transnational policies back to the regional scale; it is the era which calls for the present to operate by being aware of the past and concerned for future generations; it is the era which forces the new communitarian agricultural policy to move between globalization and regionalization. And actually the objectives of the regional, national and international agricultural policy have radically changed: after forty years of incentives to competitive quantity production, now the aim is quality; after continuous reforms to support the sector and farms, now the territory is being discovered, the problematic complexity of its integral development is being considered and structural funds are being increased. And an integrated idea of the territory and of the agricultural reality – a typically geographic idea, it must be said – enriches and at the same complicates the political problem of the management of regional zones. First of all because the risk is to neglect typically agricultural rurality by grouping productive and unproductive areas under the same category of the rural area; secondly the management of the group – and of complexities – raises some problems as to the coordination of the interventions and their prioritization. There are, actually, many actors who are asked to intervene on the same territory, ranging from the single entrepreneur to the Government and the European Union. The management of complexities, in short, makes it difficult and chaotic to choose and cut areas of intervention, so much so that the first and most urgent problem, at Community and at regional level, has been to regionalize (zonation) and reconcile specificities with the incentives given at international level for agricultural spaces.

This means that the new problems of the agricultural world are first of all political ones, linked to the difficulties faced in managing resources, and that the new development policies for the rural world will have to be evaluated taking into account the regional contexts and the different geographic scales according to which interventions are made. This means that a new era has started for agriculture which has been rediscovered as an activity capable of ensuring development and exploitation of the territory; this means, finally, that nowadays it is necessary to talk of sustainability of the agricultural systems, taking into account the weight of the intervention policies in the primary sector.

It will be necessary to start from the idea of agriculture, which is increasingly replaced by “rurality”, and this term needs to be explained. About ten years ago I tried to explain the etymology and the meaning of three adjectives of the Italian language: rural, agrarian and agricultural. On that occasion I said that, according to recent usage, the first tended to absorb the others, as well as that in the end rural areas ended up in coinciding with the territory. As a matter of fact at present the agricultural world does no more designate only the space linked to those activities which produce primary goods, and it is not possible to speak of sustainability from an ecologic point of view with regard to agriculture. Nowadays the term “rural” stands for polifunctional reality and something more, it stands for an open non-structured area to be regionalized; it stands for a lived area and a natural environment to be protected and exploited for tourist purposes; it stands for an area to be colonized by the tertiary sector; the rural is the stronghold against the artificiality of the deafening technological development.

And we are reflecting (geographers, economists, historians, politicians and operators) on the distinctive characters of rurality and rural areas. The Research Group *Comparative Geography of European and Extra-European Agricultural Areas* of Italian Geographers Association (A.Ge.I.)— of which I am the national coordinator – considered three parameters, *density*, *functionality* and *accessibility*, and looked for useful indicators in order to measure the different degrees of rurality. But we soon realized that both the second and the third parameters, being of a social-qualitative character, were difficult to apply for operational purposes.

Consequently, we attached to *density* three different values: *demography*, *settlement* and *cultivation*. The first one, quite banal, is applied by many organizations, paradoxically both regional (in the Rural Development Plans) and communitarian (in the OECD); the second, a new and little examined one, was considered according two indicators (density of isolated houses and dispersion index) and needs further investigation; the third one draws once again the attention on a basic question: is the *density-quantity of cultivations* (percentage of Cultivated Agricultural Area against Total Farm Area) an indicator of rurality? At least of a certain kind of rurality, that is agricultural reality?

Or is *quality* – that is the *intensity of cultivations* (Gross Marketable Product per hectare of Cultivated Agricultural Area) – the indicator of agricultural rurality? For more than ten years GECOAGRI has been distinguishing among Cultivated Agricultural Area, Used Agricultural Area and Total Farm Area, and between density and intensity of agricultural practice, but the distinction remained in the close circle of the experts!

Once the idea and the meaning of rurality have been explained, once the new forms of rurality have been identified and censured (farm holidays, organic cultivations, typical food products and quality agro-industry, didactic farms and horse-therapy), once agricultural areas have been classified and arranged into a hierarchy, what are the objectives that must be pursued?

Our *Thematic Atlas of Italian agriculture* starts with the word “multiplicity” and ends with the expression “different speeds”. It seems to me that these two expressions well trace the itinerary of a cultural historical, economic and geographic reflection, that for the moment being has only been started: tourism discovered villages, farmhouses, cottages and the courts typical of the Po-valley. Agro-industry aims decisively at typical quality products by now (Pachino tomatoes, Borbona beans, the lentils from Castelluccio, saffron from Navelli, truffles from Alba and bergamot orange from Reggio Calabria); cattle-breeding, on the contrary, has abandoned pastures and meadows and concentrated – not only functionally – in a few stables; the run towards efficiency and the reduction of time and production costs has eradicated the biological rhythms and cycles of vegetables and animals.

Are we, as geographers, to document the plurality of landscapes in danger of extinction? Are we to educate officials sensitive to the cultural and cultural contents of the agricultural world? Are we to cooperate in the development of plans of interventions for the exploitation and the protection of the country’s cultural and settlement heritage? Are we to publish thematic atlases – similar to the Italian one – on a regional scale for our and other European countries?

Or should we stimulate critical reflections on the basic problems of our agriculture? And what role can and will geographic research play in the rediscovery of the values of agriculture and of the territory?

European agricultural areas are following two different and opposing models of production: *the north Atlantic one*, according to which either agriculture is competitive or there is no point in being farmers, and the Mediterranean one, rooted in agricultural areas, wisely and laboriously built by man and usually evoked as marginal areas compared to those of strong agriculture. In the first case smaller farms are not even registered for assessment because they are considered to be “out of the market” (United Kingdom, France and Germany); in the second case (Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey) less productive farms – usually those in hilly or mountain areas – are asked to continue to practice traditional, non mechanized agriculture, a non competitive and not much profitable one,

although it often produces high quality products and in some cases even valuable and elitist ones. Micro-farms are encouraged to protect the environment in order to cope with the problems related to hydrogeological upheaval in plains.

### *The Common Agricultural Policy and the European countries*

In the last decade the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have rediscovered the importance of regional territory and press for a definition and an individuation of cultural and geographical peculiarities, which give incentives and investments. Nonetheless, many countries belonging to the European Union, continue to look at the Union from a production point of view; a view that has produced two different *agricultural models of development*: the *North-Atlantic* one and the *Mediterranean* one.

The United Kingdom's agriculture is a clear example of a traditional development of the primary sector corresponding to the economic imperatives; this development, already in the seventies, was collocated in an advanced stage to hasten the passage to the post-productive era. The need for a critical reflection on the limits of the traditional model, emerges in the year of its accession in the European Union (1973) and, at the beginning of the nineties, evolves into the Mac Sharry's proposal of incentives to the set-aside, welcomed by the community's policy. Since then, the British agricultural landscape selects two types of rural area: that of countryside with highly intensive production and that of unproductive marginal areas. It is not a case that these have become part of the census survey only since 1970 when support interventions to marginal areas begun. Today, this country's agriculture, with only 244,205 farms that - according to 1993 data- work on 1,301,000 hectares of used land, occupies a marginal position in European agriculture. In the United Kingdom's countryside the presence of *small-holdings* (81,000 or 1% of the total farmland) does not cancel but underlines in eastern and southern regions the intensification of cultural practises with the exception of suburban horticulture dominated by major businesses. The farming density of larger farms decreases to two thirds of British agricultural space, denouncing on one hand, the difficulties created by natural conditions and on the other those created by the will of farmers to access the set-aside development programme. The business organisation dominated by large estates characterises all the agricultural areas of England and Wales. It is a common model, the only differences are made by the higher percentage of larger farms over 300 hectares.

On the opposite side of the "North-Atlantic" model, drawn in the European agricultural landscapes and inspired by the United Kingdom, there is Turkey's agricultural system, a country that has been associated to the Union since 1963. Its distinctive characters are the signs of the ancient soil exploitation and the lack of an evolution linked to the tendencies suggested by the common

agricultural policy. According to the 1991 agricultural survey data, on an already selected farmland surface, covering only 30% of national territory, of 23,451,099 hectares, there are 4,068,432 farms. It is the highest number in European countries. The data calculated on a national scale synthesises the constitutive elements of the exploitation of Turkish countryside: 50% by macro-regions with the exception of the dry Anatolian South-East (Diyarbakir) and 50% by medium-sized (Ankara, Istanbul, Adana, Malatya, etc.) or medium-small-sized (Izmir, Trebisonda, etc.) farms that cultivate most of their land.

The traditional organisation of the agricultural areas - managed by the units of production with limited areas (medium and medium-small) - is the national model of reference, as the larger farms - large crops estates - can be found only in three regions: south-eastern region, the central-northern region and the central-southern region. On the other hand, the structural characters are not the only distinctive ones of the primary sector in comparison to the rest of Europe: the evolution of the last decades in the businesses' structure is going in the opposite direction of the member states and it continues to fractionate units of production that are already very small.

French agriculture is more similar to the British model than to the Mediterranean one. It is organised all over its national territory in large and medium-large farms that have normally medium or low cultural density with some significant exceptions (Nord-Pas de Calais, Picardy, Ile de France, Alsace). In fact, productivity has given the necessary requisites for the definition of a farm (autonomous management, at least an hectare of Agricultural Area in use -AA-, a minimum number of head of cattle, etc.), but the variety of regional agricultural systems inherited by tradition, emerges both from the different proportion of cultivated surface and from the presence of micro-farms in all the regions of the Mediterranean and of Eastern Alsace. 70% of French units of production are collocated in the class of largest farms and the weak farming density enforces the image of an agricultural sector that runs towards post-production tendencies suggested by the set-aside common policy. The process of business concentration - that began in the sixties - in a few decades was to lead to a decrease in number of the units of production of 60%, that it is about down to one million. At the same time, the participation of France to every deliberation of the common policy encouraged it to join the most topical regulations that reward the safeguard of green spaces and the service functions of the primary sector.

Germany's agricultural area is original also because of the recent political reunification of the national territory. Actually, the western sector is completely different from the eastern one as they have been influenced by their political past. Therefore, *Old and New lander* present farms with different farming density due more to economic-managerial factors than to climatic-morphological ones. The regions of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Old lander*) and those of the Democratic Republic (*New lander*) clearly show: the first ones the inheritance criteria (according to the

primogeniture in Germanic law or according to the equal subdivision of holdings in Roman law) and the different degree of fragmentation that follows (Hesse and Schleswig-Holstein regions). While for the second, it is evident the weight of collectivisation that has reduced the number of units of production to a few thousands and has enlarged the medium areas up to 265 hectares. The variety and the distribution of regional agricultural systems strengthens the image of an historical dualism that today is going towards a single development model: modernisation of the means of production, a reduction in the number of farms and an increase in their medium size. 651,249 production units out of 19,145,966 hectares of area increasing farming density that never goes below the lowest levels of sylvan-pastoral marginality.

Similarly to the evolution of the Italian agricultural systems, the transformation of the Spanish countryside has answered, in the last thirty years, to the dominating imperatives in Europe eliminating in the rural areas of this country the farms organised by the medium businesses. The number of units of production decreased from 3,007,626 in 1962 to only 2,284,994 in 1989, due to the strong presence of farms belonging to the inferior classes of area (44.2% are micro-farms). This is in contrast with the concentration of most of the land in large farms that share 71.8% of the total amount, leaving only 1.8% to the small ones.

The variety of farms and agricultural situations, inheritance of the fractionation of the estates and of more than a secular exploitation on which the policy of the *concentraciòn parcelaria* has intervened, is accentuated by the morphological and environmental conditions of provincial lands. In some of them, it is based on first classes' size (Pontevedra, Tarragona, Valencia), in others larger farms are dominant (Seville, Valladolid); this show a process of appropriation and ploughing of cultivable lands.

Greece, with its eastern geographical position when compared to other European Union countries, is the country closer to the "Mediterranean model of production", up to the point of strengthening it in the last decades, in spite of the pressures that, like other European countries, it has received from the common agricultural policy in the primary sector. The fluidity of smaller farms makes the real estate market stable, and encourages a more intensive exploitation of micro-estates. The cultivated terraces are revived and crops of value are chosen because they are stimulated by an increasing demand due to the presence of tourists. In spite of the insistence of estates rearrangement programmes, in 1981, Greek agriculture was still based on units of production of the first classes of area size. Therefore, even though the selective criteria reduces the assessed agricultural area to only 3,545,500 hectares, the fact that it is divided in 998,876 farms, makes clear the estates fragmentation that characterises the Greek primary sector and the degree of representativeness of this countryside in the regards of the "Mediterranean model" of agricultural Europe.

The regional organisation of Italian agricultural systems, dramatically shows the contrasts of the primary sector in our and other European countries. Up to the first half of the last century, environmental factors that prevented the cultivation of lands as well as the presence of large estates pressed towards an increase in farm size. Today, this increase is an effect of the common agricultural policy. The change occurred at the end of the fifties. Up to then, peasant struggles, agricultural reforms and total reclamation of lands had opposed -with the planned distribution of pieces of land in proportion to the needs of farmers' families and to the agro-economic properties of the soil- big farms. These were the result of the need to invest city capital in real estate while the development of the métayage had fractionated, at least from a functional point of view, the estates of the nobility and middle-classes, even those that had unproductive and infertile soils.

Today, an inverse and contradictory process levels all the Italian countryside from Veneto to Calabria, from Piedmont to Sicily, even though some regions are emblematic for the extent and rapidity of these changes (Emilia Romagna). The increase in the number and size of large farms, in areas where environmental conditions are more favourable to agricultural exploitation is accompanied by a relevant weakening of productive intensity due to the choice of monocropping systems. On the other hand, the increase in cultivation practices by small units of production in Europe's mostly inhabited and cultivated areas (Naples), underlines, once again, the contradictions of Italian agriculture. The expansion of greenhouses fully extends the possibility to follow vegetative cycles; the sheds where there is a cultivation "without soil", use space without soil, overlapping and sometimes eliminating the ancient intervention of the farmer.

European agricultural areas are oriented towards two opposite productive models<sup>1</sup>: the *North-Atlantic model* according to which the only real agriculture is the competitive one; and the *Mediterranean model* rooted in rural areas, modelled by man with wisdom and fatigue that is too often considered as marginal (see picture 1 & 2).

### *The European agricultural areas between the sectorial and the territorial models of CAP*

Osservate attraverso i loro caratteri strutturali, le campagne di alcuni stati dell'Unione mettono bene in evidenza il doppio volto dell'Europa agricola: quello proposto dal modello settoriale delle grandi imprese meccanizzate e competitive che adottano colture annuali e, nelle fasce costiere e pianeggianti, mettono a coltura quasi interamente la superficie di cui dispongono e quello proposto dal modello territoriale dei giardini mediterranei che ritagliano gli spazi agricoli in fazzoletti di terra destinati alle colture di pregio (arboricoltura e orticoltura), esigendo la presenza costante di abbondante manodopera. La stessa comparazione mette però altrettanto bene in luce la pluralità

delle combinazioni di strutture e di situazioni agricole e la molteplicità delle realtà agricole che ne risulta sia a scala regionale che provinciale.

Così ad esempio l'inquietante presenza delle unità produttive di dimensioni troppo ridotte -sempre segnalata dalla polverizzazione- non è esclusiva dei paesi mediterranei ad agricoltura tradizionale e di più antico dissodamento, ma esaspera anche, e in numerosi casi, gli spazi agricoli dominati dalle aziende di più grandi dimensioni. Il loro numero ingombrante pesa cioè anche in aree che si vorrebbe fossero organizzate razionalmente ed efficacemente solo in funzione della competitività del mercato e del profitto economico. Né l'organizzazione tradizionale delle pratiche colturali deve essere acriticamente assegnata a tutti gli spazi agricoli ritagliati minuziosamente; la marginalità economica investe infatti anche tante aree agricole strutturate dalla grande azienda che, pur presente a livello fondiario, rallenta la sua attività abbandonando i terreni al maggese, al pascolo e alla foresta.

D'altra parte la scarsa imprenditorialità dei conduttori e la carente disponibilità di capitali si associano più frequentemente al modello di sviluppo tradizionale diffuso nei paesi mediterranei, dove la presenza di strutture aziendali a prevalente piccola proprietà contadina rende problematico lo sviluppo di queste campagne -peraltro generalmente dotate di valori paesaggistici e culturali sconosciuti in altre campagne dell'Europa centrosettentrionale- verso le nuove funzioni economiche (salvaguardia dell'ambiente, agriturismo, artigianato alimentare), proposte al settore primario dal post-produttivismo. Viceversa imprese economicamente vitali riescono a fiorire su poche centinaia di ettari in molte aree periurbane o ad elevata specializzazione riservate alla produzione di pregio (fiori, ortaggi, ecc.), e questo è il caso che accomuna gli spazi agricoli organizzati sia dal modello produttivo settoriale, sia dal modello di sviluppo territoriale.

In un ipotetico ciclo evolutivo dell'attività agricola, che attraversa il tempo, intrecciando tradizioni e innovazioni, e lo spazio sovrapponendo il modello mediterraneo a quello nord-atlantico, mentre alcuni paesi europei sono andati già chiaramente a collocarsi (Regno Unito, Grecia) altri sembrano ancora alla ricerca di un orientamento definitivo; le agricolture dei primi, proprio perchè presentano caratteristiche molto marcate, vanno ad occupare le posizioni estreme e disegnano il contorno entro il quale ritrovare tutte le altre. In Grecia si punta ancora sulla intensificazione e sulla specializzazione delle coltivazioni; le aziende continuano a frazionarsi, addirittura si ricavano nuovi spazi, costruendo terrazzi e mettendoli a coltura. All'opposto nel Regno Unito lo spazio agricolo e le imprese stanno già vivendo la fase del post-produttivismo; la struttura aziendale dilata le proprie maglie a centinaia di ettari e si pone il problema di che cosa considerare impresa agricola e che cosa spazio rurale, per estendere a quest'ultimo l'intervento delle politiche strutturali. Anche la Germania, che vive l'incontro tra due realtà agricole che per quaranta anni hanno marciato a velocità e ritmi diversi: quella dei vecchi e quella dei nuovi *lander*, gli uni più vicini al modello

anglosassone e gli altri a quello dell'Europa centrale, è impegnata ad assorbirne le differenze e ad orientarsi verso l'uno o l'altro dei modelli proposti. La Spagna sembra invece già orientata: dal 1962 al 1989 ha perduto un milione di aziende a tutto vantaggio di quelle più grandi, che hanno inglobato nuova superficie e sono aumentate anche di numero, mentre la Turchia mette in atto esperienze di valorizzazione del suo settore primario che ricordano da vicino quelle attuate nell'Italia del periodo fascista e del secondo dopoguerra.

In tutti i paesi considerati lo spazio agricolo pertanto risponde, quasi univocamente, a due tendenze evolutive dei caratteri strutturali: diminuzione del numero delle aziende ed aumento della loro superficie. La Francia in questo senso è emblematica perché in poco meno di quarant'anni le sue campagne hanno visto dimezzato il numero delle unità produttive e raddoppiata la superficie media di ciascuna. Solo la Turchia accusa tutto il ritardo accumulato e muove, con variazioni di segno opposto a quelle generali, verso un modello produttivo tradizionale riducendo il numero delle aziende di medie dimensioni per aumentare quello delle micro e delle piccole aziende.

E le nostre campagne italiane vivono una duplice tentazione: valorizzare e rafforzare storiche attività colturali di pregio e di qualità (floricoltura, frutticoltura, orticoltura, viticoltura, olivicoltura, ecc.) confrontandosi, attraverso queste, con le richieste del mercato internazionale oppure cedere all'exasperazione dello sfruttamento agricolo meccanizzato che abbatte i costi di esercizio e affronta la competitività commerciale sul piano quantitativo. L'Italia agricola, rappresentata dalle grandi aziende capitalistiche e dalle micro-aziende a conduzione diretta, è attratta verso due modelli produttivi opposti, entrambi ben rappresentati nel panorama delle campagne europee quello nord-atlantico proposto dai paesi anglosassoni -al quale va adeguandosi gran parte dello spazio agricolo centro-settentrionale- e quello mediterraneo in cui sono ancora immerse Spagna, Grecia e Turchia. Il primo la porta a pieno titolo all'interno delle problematiche produttivistiche competitive e la invita ad inseguire le proposte normative del *set-aside*, il secondo la incoraggia a guardare alle singole potenzialità regionali, a suggerire progetti non solo di sviluppo settoriale, ma anche di valorizzazione territoriale.

Sulle trasformazioni tendenziali e in atto nelle agricolture dei paesi europei è infatti intervenuta con crescente autorità la politica agricola comunitaria che a partire dai Trattati di Roma del 1957, ha dapprima incentivato l'aumento della produttività e della competitività delle imprese di maggiori dimensioni; quindi si è caricata l'onere di sostenere i prezzi dei prodotti eccedentari ed ha infine sollecitato gli imprenditori agricoli a ridurre gli spazi coltivati e le loro produzioni. Si è sviluppata negli ultimi anni del XX secolo, una crescente *culture de la lois* che impegna gli agricoltori a cogliere ogni suggerimento della politica comunitaria, ogni incentivo proposto e approvato, per orientare la scelta degli ordinamenti colturali da adottare nei loro campi e attingere ai fondi garantiti. Gli incentivi alle oleaginose hanno spinto mais, girasole e soia ben oltre i limiti

che avrebbero suggerito le vocazioni ambientali dei terreni agrari, mentre gli “spazi rurali”, fino ad oggi ritenuti marginali rispetto alle aree dell’agricoltura forte, conoscono un rinnovato interesse per il ruolo che potrebbero assumere nel salvaguardare l’ambiente e nel proteggere le valli dal dissesto idrogeologico.

*Culture de la lois* – according to the French expression used to define the first model – and *Culture of the territory* – fostered by agricultural landscapes which in some cases have become the heritage of mankind – inspired two models for the organization of the European countryside. *Culture de la lois* – capable of pursuing community incentives through timely re-conversions – and *Culture of the territory* – inspired to landscapes built in the Mediterranean area by snatching to marshes, rocks, woods and the disengagement of latifundists territories which have been accurately modelled by age-hold human labour – will have to converge – with the support of economic, geographic and historical interdisciplinary investigations – in order to spur the new Communitarian Agricultural Policy to make choices and orientate itself and in order for it to be applied on a local, regional and national scale.

How much can the southern countryside, besieged by tourism, teach to the northern one which is just starting with farm-holidays? And what kind of precious information will it be possible to transfer from the agroindustrial businesses in the North to the new ones in the South?

#### *A new era for the agricultural geography*

A new era has ripen for agriculture, there is a new awareness of the “land wealth”. And a new era has come for geography as well, which sees the acknowledgement of the value of its object of study – the relationship between human society and natural environment embodied in the development and the organization of the territory – and the importance of its interpretative course, where investigations on a local, regional and global scale are intertwined. In this phase Italian agriculture is a privileged research laboratory, since our country holds the supremacy: because of the multiplicity of micro-environments, pedologic engineering and hydraulic solutions adopted, tower bells and squares – that is of local typical productions– we are in an advanced position compared to other European and extra-European countries. I am convinced that there is really a lot of work to be done and the UGI Commission “Sustainability of Rural Systems” undoubtedly has to make the biggest effort.

The reflection could follow three different directions:

1. re-definition of rural spaces which, in view of the most recent directives of the EU agricultural policy, are less and less identifiable with cultivated areas only, and tend, on the contrary, to coincide increasingly more with the integrated geographic space;

2. redefinition of the functions of the primary sector which nowadays has to meet not only basic human needs but must also protect natural resources, ensure survival of future generations and safeguard the health of farmers and consumers, offer recreational services (green tourism) and/or health service (ippotherapy and recovery communities);

3. redefinition of the conditions under which agriculture is practiced nowadays, its practices being more and more conditioned by international policy and choices depending on trade policies than by the physical character of the natural environment or by the difficulty encountered in overcoming them, by devising innovative cultivations techniques.

All that we are left with is to choose the field of investigation on which our know how is to be applied and our energy devoted; all that we have to do is to wish ourselves, and particularly to the younger generations, “good work”.

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