

The Nature of Rural Development:

Towards a Sustainable Integrated Rural Policy in Europe

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**Actors, Institutions and
Attitudes to Rural Development:
The French National Report**

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1. Introduction: The Rural and Agricultural Character of the Country

1.1. The rural population

France is arguably the most 'rural' of the Western European states. Although the French population lives essentially in the towns and cities (around 77%), this urban concentration is a relatively new phenomenon. Two generations ago, over half of French people still lived in the countryside. The process of urban concentration has been achieved through demographic growth, immigration and rural depopulation, the latter having been on a massive scale over the last 50 years. Consequently, the overall demographic profile of rural France presents a clear contrast, depopulation, particularly of the marginal regions lying far from major urban centres, and population growth and concentration in the rural areas lying within metropolitan hinterlands. The size of France makes this contrast all the more apparent. 'Isolated rural areas', following the classification of the INSEE ¹ (1996) and characterised by low birth rates, an elderly population and progressive depopulation, account for 37% of national territory, 10, 900 of France's 36 000 communes and around 5 million inhabitants. By way of contrast, the periurban rural zones (classified as 'areas under low urban influence', INSEE 1996) account for 24% of the national territory and also around 5 million people. In between these two categories of French rurality lies a third, the 'rural poles', essentially rural towns having a workforce of between 2 and 5 000, and their immediate hinterlands. These account for around 3 million people. Hence, the total 'rural' population, according to the INSEE classification of 1996, amounts to 13 million people.

Three observations might be drawn from the recent demographic evolution of rural France. First, rural France is increasingly polarised and differentiated suggesting that a single all embracing policy approach to the French countryside, as has hitherto been common, is less and less tenable. Second, depopulation remains a very real concern for a considerable proportion of French space. Maintaining people and activities in these depopulating areas emerges as a central rural policy objective. Third the traditional town-country distinction is no longer as pertinent as it used to be with highest growth rates being recorded in rural areas close to towns. Increasingly, rural policy needs to deal collectively with town and country in more relevant composite policy spaces.

Farming families (defined according to the employment of the principal wage-earner) currently represent only 2.5% of all French families. Some 70% of farm families live in rural areas (using the INSEE definition of 'predominantly rural areas, 1996) and of these over half in 'Isolated rural areas'. Although farmers represent a higher proportion of all actively employed people in these areas, generally, the proportion of farmers and farm-workers in the total national active population is falling. It currently stands at 3.5% against 13% in 1970. At the same time, in rural areas, the proportion of non-agricultural employment is rising.

1.2. Agriculture

Agriculture is the dominant land-user of rural France. Farming accounts for 56.5% (30 million hectares) of the national area (55 million hectares). A further 27.8% of the land areas (15 million ha) is given over to forestry and around 8% is considered unproductive or 'natural'. Since 1950, the Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) has diminished by around 6.3 million hectares while the forest and urbanised areas have grown by 3.8 million and 2.5 million respectively over the same period. Within the current UAA, some 61% is given over to arable land, 35% to permanent grassland and 4% to permanent crops, notably, fruit and vines.

¹ *Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques*

With an annual production valued at around 47 billion Euro, French agriculture dominates European production (one fifth of the EU total) yet represents only 1.9% of French GNP. The high-value added productions of 4 regions, the three wine regions of Champagne-Ardennes, Aquitaine and Pays de la Loire and the intensive livestock regions of Brittany amount to over one third of total national added value.

Table 1.1 Evolution of arable land use of France (thousands of hectares)

	1980	1999
Cereals	9 892	9 190
Oil bearing plants	506	2 030
Protein bearing plants	99	659
Forage crops	5 292	4 385
Vegetable crops	473	432
Set aside	221	856
Others	989	816
Total arable surface	17 472	18 370

Source RGA

The number of farms in France has fallen dramatically over the last few decades. Currently, there are 680, 000 farms, compared with well over one million in 1988. The fall is particularly marked in the livestock sector. In ten years, the number of dairy farms has fallen by over 50%, though many of these have subsequently converted to meat production. Average farm size in France is currently 41.7 ha which represents a doubling over the last 25 years. Farms with a UAA of over 100 ha represent 11 % of all farms and account for 43% of the total UAA. They are largely concentrated in the Paris basin and the north of France. The national average annual Gross Farm Revenue is 179 000 Francs (1996) though this varies regionally from 346 000 in the Paris basin to 72 000 Francs in the Limousin and parts of the South West. Over half of the direct payments made to farmers following CAP reform in 1992 go to only 86 000 farmers (20% of the total) predominantly those in the Paris Basin and northern *départements*.

2. The institutional and policy framework

2.1. Principal institutional actors

Rural development policy is a complex and traversal policy domain in France involving, on the one hand, a series of different state institutions and agencies which are, characteristically, organised individually in a highly hierarchical manner and, on the other hand, a relatively newly empowered local government structure composed of regions, *départements* and communes and their elected councils. In addition to the 'two pillar' model of the French state, one can add, first, the professional interests and communities which are, to some extent, dominated in this policy domain by the agricultural profession and its representatives and, second, an expanding civil society sector represented by the 'associations' or local NGOs, national NGOs, particularly in the environmental domain. Non-agricultural professional interests constitute a third component of the non-state, non local government actors in rural development.

Government and the State

At a Ministerial level, the *Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche* (hereafter, Ministry of Agriculture) has overall responsibility for rural development policy in addition to agricultural, fisheries and food policy. The Ministry is responsible for drawing up and implementing the French Rural Development Plan (the *Direction de l'Espace Rural et de la Forêt* DERF) and for the Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation, CTE - the DEPSE of the Ministry).

The *Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de l'Environnement* (Ministry of Territorial Planning and the Environment) is responsible for French environmental policy and broad regional planning (known as *Aménagement du Territoire*). The Environment Ministry is charged also with implementing the EU Habitats and Bird Directives as well as water policy.

Other central actors include the *Ministère de l'Intérieure*, whose competencies with respect to rural development concern the organisation of local government (and in particular, local inter-communal structures) and local fiscal policy, and the *Ministère de l'Équipement*, whose responsibilities include land-use planning and infrastructure.

At the national level, other statutory bodies include:

- the *Centre national pour l'aménagement des structures des exploitations agricoles* (CNASEA) charged with implementing EU agri-environmental and agricultural structures policy
- the *Société d'Aménagement Foncier et d'Établissement Rural* (SAFER) whose responsibilities include rural land management.
- The *Agences d'Eau*, statutory bodies charged with programming and financing water supply facilities, sewage treatment works (in association with sub-national authorities and private water companies).

At the sub-national level, other state actors include:

- the *Directions régionales de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt* (DRAF) and the *Directions départementales de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt* (DDAF) under the authority of the regional and departmental *Préfets*;
- the *Directions Régionales de l'Environnement* (DIREN);
- the *Commissions Départementales d'Orientation de l'Agriculture* (CDOA);
- the *Commissions Régionales d'Orientation agricole* (CROA);

- the *Chambres consulaires* (notably the *Chambres d'Agriculture* and the *Chambres de Commerce*).

Local Government

French local, or sub-national government is made up of three territorial levels (the 22 Régions, the 95 Départements and the 36,000 Communes and their respective elected assemblies, the Conseil régional, the Conseil général and the Conseil municipal). Each level has distinct powers, responsibilities and competencies within the field of rural development and nature protection. With respect to specific responsibilities, the Région is primarily concerned with financial programming through the *Contrats de Plan Etat Région* (CPER), nature conservation and protection policy (through the DIREN), the setting of region-wide agri-environmental programmes and broader investment (through co-funding arrangements) in rural development. In addition, the regions are charged with the overall operational responsibility for the Parcs Naturels Régionaux. The Départements have distinct powers to create, through acquisition, and to manage *Espaces Naturels Sensibles* (sensitive areas managed for public access, recreation and landscape or nature protection). In addition, many Départements are also engaged in financial investment and environmental protection programmes, such as the *Programme Vert et Bleu* in Brittany which has been a major player in the reduction of agricultural pollution. The Communes are traditionally charged with the management of the local environment. The police powers of the commune mayor, for example, concern local water pollution, noise, the dumping of waste and so on. Communes, as we show below, are also central actors in the rural development process, largely through the various instruments and measures that have been introduced by successive governments since the mid 1970s to promote local development policy through the medium of intercommunal groupings.

Economic Interests

Within the agricultural policy sector, the principal agricultural trade union is the national *Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles* (FNSEA) and its departmental federations traditionally associated (though by no means exclusively) with larger cereal and intensive husbandry farming. Other agricultural trade unions include the *Confédération Paysanne*, more traditionally associated with the Left and with smaller livestock farmers.

Environmental Interests

Although less well developed than in some other European states (notably Germany and the UK), the environmental sector, composed of local associations and environmental NGOs is rapidly expanding in France, both in numbers and in political organisation. The larger national bodies include the LPO and *France, Nature, Environnement*, TOS and *Eaux et Rivières de Bretagne*.

2.2 Principal policy sectors

In terms of policy, rural development falls essentially into three different but closely related policy frameworks; the *Plan de Développement Rural National* (PDRN) or National Rural Development Plan), the *Loi d'Orientation Agricole* of 1999 and the *DOCUP*, the implementation mechanisms for EU Structural Funds. Two further policy domains which, as shall be shown below, have a key role to play in future local development policy and its implementation are: first, territorial planning (*Aménagement du Territoire*) and, in particular,

the various instruments and mechanisms associated with the implementation of the 1999 *Loi d'Orientation sur l'Amenagement et Développement Durable du Territoire* and, second, local government re-organisation; and, most notably, the establishment and legitimisation of new forms of local government grouping, known under the generic phrase of intercommunality. In this section of the report, we identify the different components of these three policy frameworks. A longer discussion of their current and likely impact, as well as the issues and contentions they have provoked, is presented in Section 4.

2.2.1 The Plan de Développement Rural National (PDRN)

The Draft National Rural Development Plan was drawn up in late 1999 in accordance with EU Regulation 1257/1999. France has chosen to adopt a single unique Rural Development Plan rather than, as in some other EU states, a series of regional plans both in order to maintain a maximum level of coherence across the national territory and to avoid creating too complex a structure given that the regional authorities in France are already involved in preparing other plans and schemas that link closely to rural development objectives. The PDRN is, however, 'deconcentrated' in that the principal mechanisms for its implementation are locally determined.

The PDRN is heavily oriented towards agriculture and the role and function of farming within the rural economy, environment and society. In all, the Plan identifies 22 distinct measures (see Table 2.1) regrouped into 6 categories (see below, Table 4.2 of Section 4). The total projected budget for the Plan is 14 710.50 million Euros for the period 2000 to 2006. Of this, some 5 927.73 million Euros will come from EU sources, the remainder from national and sub-national sources. Some 56.4% of the budget, around 8 304.95 million, will be used exclusively in Objective 2 areas (Table 2.2).

Table 2.1. The 22 rural development measures introduced by the Plan de Développement Rural National

MEASURES	
a	Investment in farms
b	Installation of young farmers
c	Training
d	Early retirement
e	Less favoured areas
f	Agri-environmental schemes
g	Improving the commercialisation of farm products
h	Farm woodland scheme
i	Other forestry measures
j	Land improvement
k	Land reorganisation
l	Farm labour replacement services and farm management services
m	Commercialisation of quality agricultural products
n	Essential services for the rural population and economy
o	Renovation of villages and rural heritage protection
p	Farm diversification
q	Management of water resources used in agriculture
r	Agricultural infrastructural development
s	Encouragement of tourist and craft industries
t	Environment protection and animal welfare measures
u	Reconstitution of agricultural potential following natural disasters
v	Financial engineering

Table 2.2. Budgetary programming for the *Plan de Développement Rural National*
 Figures are in million Euros

	France		Objective 2 areas	
	Total cost	EU contribution	Total Cost	EU contribution
2000	1 944.35	717.14	1 0935.76	418.76
2001	1 999.95	802.01	1 122.42	469.13
2002	2 146.97	878.79	1 213.20	514.68
2003	2 135.23	872.51	1 206.15	510.92
2004	2 199.79	904.31	1 244.95	530.03
2005	2 169.57	888.88	1 266.88	520.80
2006	2 120.63	864.08	1 197.58	505.95
TOTAL 2000-2006	14 710.50	5 927.73	8 304.95	3 470.26

Source: Plan de Développement Rural National, Ministère de l'Agriculture. 2000a

The Loi d'Orientation Agricole

The 1999 Agriculture Act is closely linked to the *Plan de Développement Rural National* of the same year. Given that the PDRN is essentially oriented towards farming both as the key rural activity and as the vehicle for bringing greater social and economic benefits to rural areas, especially those threatened with population and employment decline, the 1999 Agriculture Law provides the key delivery mechanism for current rural policy. The *Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation* (farm territorial contracts or CTE) were introduced by the 1999 Act as a means of promoting and funding genuine agricultural multifunctionality within rural France. In seeking to re-orientate French farming about three inter-linked objectives, agricultural production, environmental protection and rural economic sustainability, the CTE have a number of antecedents. First, they build upon the experience of the agri-environmental measures following EU Regulation 2078/92. The various schemes introduced in France between 1993 and 1999 (Buller and Brives, 2000) heralded the way, not only, for incorporating environmental objectives into agricultural management practices but also for legitimizing the 'contract' as a pertinent and effective means of engaging farmers. Second, they build upon a range of existing measures (such as the *Dotation Jeune Agriculteur* or DJA) which have, for many years, sought to encourage the young to enter farming and the old to leave. Finally, the CTE take on board part of the rationale of the, equally longstanding, *Plans d'Amélioration Matériel* (PAM) which act as farm investment schemes. In combining these different components into a single Contrat (though the PAMs can still be obtained outside a CTE), and in introducing additional criteria relating to the promotion of farm employment and the encouragement of territorial coherence (with the grouping of CTEs in sensitive areas), the CTE as, arguably, a form of pro-sustainability re-coupling, lie at the heart of the 'second pillar' of Agenda 2000 (see below, Section 4.3).

2.2.2. *The EU Structure Funds and the DOCUP²*

The third framework within which rural development policy is implemented in France concerns the EU Structural Funds. For the current period (2000-2006), France has been allocated 108 billion Francs (around 16.5 billion Euros) of Structural Funds, slightly less than

² *Document Unique de Programmation*, implemented at the regional level under the authority of the regional Préfets

was received for the previous allocation period (1994-1999). Under the reorganisation of the EU Structural Funds following agreement on the Agenda 2000 package, the shift from Objective 5b to Objective 2 for rural areas has resulted in a net reduction in the total area in France eligible for rural development aid from the FEDER, FSE and FEOGA. For the 2000-2006 period, the total population covered by the eligibility criteria amounts to 18.7 million, a reduction of some 24% with respect to the previous period. The qualifying regions will be eligible to receive a total Objective 2 allocation for France of 5.4 billion Euros, amounting to 41 euros/inhabitant/year.

Under the existing provisions for the implementation and allocation of Structural Funds to rural development objectives, a high degree of complementarity is planned between the PDRN and the DOCUP. The DOCUP represents a strongly decentralised and regional programming of EAGGF-Guarantee rural development funds for Objective 2 and transition regions (France being the only EU Member State to use EAGGF-G funds for Objective 2 areas through the DOCUP mechanism). In terms of the overall implementation of the Rural Development Regulation, the PDRN accounts for around 85% of the total relevant EAGGF-G allocation with the DOCUP (Objective 2) accounting for around 15%. Within Objective 2 areas, the DOCUP represent regional frameworks for the allocation of funds for 14 of the PDRN measures identified above (see above, Table 2.1.) either uniquely or in association with other mechanisms such as the CTE (Table 2.3) or with collective actions organised at the local level. Of these 14 (Table 2.3, below), measure 't' (environmental protection) accounts for around 23% of the currently allocated DOCUP budgets, followed by 'n' (essential services) at 12.2%, 'm' (commercialisation of quality agricultural products) at 11.6% and 'p' (farm diversification) at around 10.6%.

Particular attention is given in the projected implementation of Objective 2 policy over the next 6 years to the facilitation of local territorial co-operation and coherence. Building upon the 'bottom-up' approach used in LEADER and extending it considerably further than has been the case with preceding Objective 5b policy, funded rural development actions will be focused upon projects emanating from local interests, such as groups of farmers, intercommunal structures, ad hoc local rural development agencies, regional parks (see below, Section 5) and other local structures.

Table 2.3. Contribution of the DOCUP to rural development measures

Measures		DOCUP
g	Improving the commercialisation of farm products	Medium and small firms Projects under 1.5 million Francs
j	Land improvement	Except pastoral land
k	Land reorganisation	Except projects financed by SAFER
l	Farm labour replacement services and farm management services	DOCUP
m	Commercialisation of quality agricultural products	DOCUP and Collective actions
n	Essential services for the rural population and economy	DOCUP
o	Renovation of villages and rural heritage protection	DOCUP and Collective actions
p	Farm diversification	DOCUP and Collective actions
q	Management of water resources used in agriculture	DOCUP and Collective actions
r	Agricultural infrastructural development	DOCUP
s	Encouragement of tourist and craft industries	DOCUP
t	Environment protection and animal welfare measures	DOCUP and Collective actions except NATURA 2000 and mountains areas
u	Reconstitution of agricultural potential following natural disasters	DOCUP
v	Financial engineering	DOCUP

2.2.3. LEADER

The territorial impact of LEADER within French rural areas has been significant. The 163 French schemes currently in operation cover approximately 240 000 km². On average, the current schemes involve areas of around 1,500 km² though there are substantial variations around this mean figure. One of the largest LEADER territories, that of the Corsica LEADER which includes much of the central rural part of the Island, amounts to an area of some 7, 000 km². The Lozère LEADER, located in part of the Cevennes National Park, covers an area of some 7150 km². At the other end of the scale, far smaller territories are found in the Eastern region of Franche Comté where LEADER schemes commonly involve areas of well under 800 km² though small area schemes are also found in the Brittany and Provence regions.

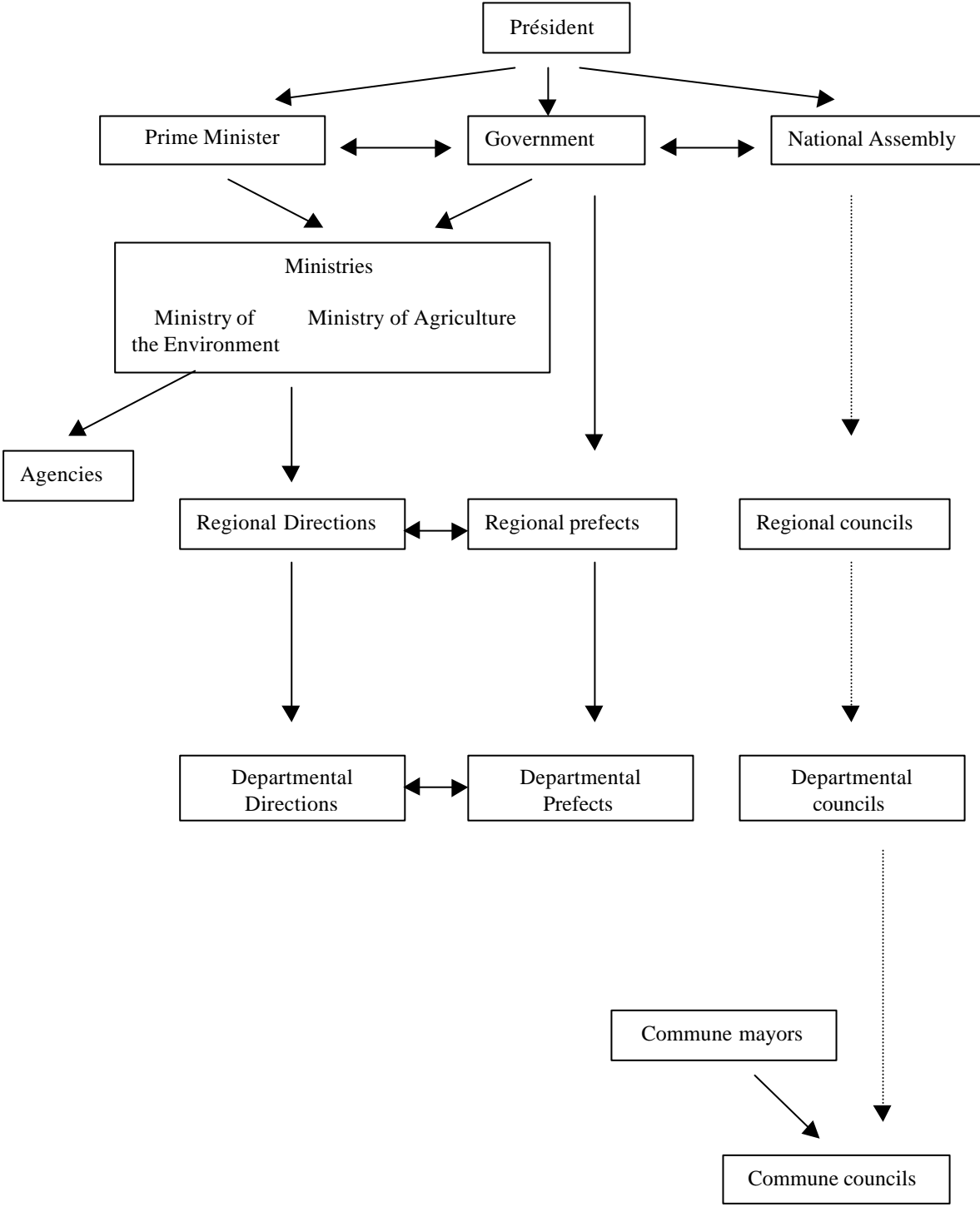
More significantly, the LEADER schemes cover a large proportion of the French rural population. The 91 schemes for which full population data is available account for some 4.2 million people. The number of people living within individual schemes averages at around 50,000 though this ranges from as many as 160,000 in the Pays d'Auge scheme in Basse Normandie and 122,000 in the planned Objective 2000 LEADER scheme in Lot et Garonne, to as few as 6000 and 5000 in the Montagne Ardechoise and Var Valley schemes in the South of France. Taken together, these areal and demographic indicators reveal a rural territory characterised by low population densities (for the most part under 40 habitants per km²) and the general absence of proximate urban centres. The distribution of the 163 French LEADER schemes shows the predominance of schemes in the Southern and Western regions, concentrated in a band running from the Limousin to the Pyrenées along the Western flank of the Massif Central, particularly in the regions of Midi-Pyrénées (24 schemes), Poitou Charente (15) and Aquitaine (13). The two eastern French regions of Franche Conté (13) and Rhône Alpes (13) also show relatively high numbers of schemes.

One of the principal LEADER effects within France has been to shift the local rural policy agenda away from solely economic development strategies, for many years the mainstay of non-agricultural rural policy, towards a more reflexive approach to issues of social cohesion and territorial composition. The promotion and encouragement of economic sustainability and growth, largely through tourism and the commodification of local culture and through the maintenance of local industries, in many ways the traditional preoccupations of recent French rural policy, particularly that led at the local level, proved to be a consistently important theme within LEADER I schemes, accounting for some 61% of the total LEADER I budget (CNASEA, 1996). The extension of the LEADER initiative through LEADER II has however allowed a more innovative set of actions to emerge, reflecting in part shifting priorities in French rural policy. If LEADER I projects often failed to address rural social issues, many LEADER II schemes, drawing additionally on the growing role of local communes and départements in this domain following political decentralisation, increasingly include actions to improve the capacity of rural territories and actors to act as viable social development foci, and in doing so, seek to reinforce local political, as well as socio-cultural identity. Although economic development actions continue to account for the bulk of LEADER actions, these too have diversified to include the reinforcement of local agricultural production zones, employment creation, linked, in particular, to the restructuring of the manufacturing sector, and the development of rural services, frequently with the objective of retaining the existing population or of encouraging people to move from urban centres into otherwise declining rural zones. In these, LEADER has often shown itself to be genuinely innovative. Linking into parallel concerns for agricultural diversification, quality food production, local product labelling, agriculture and the environment and high added-value production systems, a number of LEADER schemes (for example the Préalpes Dromoises, Sud Vendée, Pays d'Ardor) have specifically targeted the agricultural activities within their territory as the basis for constructing a local development project. This is innovative in three important ways. First, it represents an attempt to see farming less as an element in a series

of largely vertical production chains and more a key horizontal component of local territorial construction, definition and identity; the de-territorialisation of agriculture, being one of the more marked features of agricultural modernisation and production specialisation of the last thirty years (Buller, 1999). Second, making agriculture the basis for a local territorial project flies in the face of a long established sectoral administrative structure within France that has consistently separated farming from other components of rural policy-making. Finally, LEADER schemes, to some extent like agri-environmental schemes, have brought local political and civic actors into the agricultural policy arena for the first time, an arena from which they have long been excluded.

LEADER schemes fall readily both into the model of territorially based administrative recomposition currently marking the French political landscape and into the classic managerialist approach to local policy making. Two observations might be made. First, it is clear that LEADER schemes have not, in general, permitted alternative representative structures to emerge, structures that might embody different conceptions or ideas as to the mechanisms and direction of local development policy. Indeed, outside a relatively restrained set of local political and economic leaders, few people amongst the local population within the territories concerned are aware of the LEADER initiative nor its application to their local area. Yet, although a generalised pluralism involving an active participating citizenship has, arguably, yet to emerge, allowing markedly different rural interests seeking appropriate representation, LEADER schemes have clearly contributed to, and in some cases directly promoted, forms of local-level intra-administrative or intra-governmental pluralism and partnership through which traditional sectoral and hierarchical barriers are being challenged, albeit by local government and administrative actors. On the ground, the shift from intercommunal management structures to intra-territorial and inter-sectoral development programmes has arguably redefined the *modus operandi* of local representation and as such challenges the vertical State structures within which they operate and function. This is a significant step forward for while it still remains rather institutionally limited, it does nevertheless indicate a movement within the modes and methods of an emerging French rural governance not only into areas and competencies that have traditionally been in the State and public domain but also into the relatively uncharted waters of horizontal strategic and negotiated social and economic development actions (Clarke and Stewart, 1994). However, the extent to which this emerging model represents a substantive shift from the State-local government model of territorial co-management anticipated and put into place by political decentralisation, is far from clear.

3. Diagram of the institutional framework



.....> Non hierarchical relationship

4. Perceptions and Perspectives of the main institutions and other key players

In this section of the report, we examine the key areas of current debate in French rural development policy. The section is divided into three parts. The first short introductory section identifies the broad context of current rural development in France. The second examines the different positions in what are essentially a set of internal French debates concerning the evolution of territorial development policy as a whole and the place of specifically rural development policy within it. The third part considers the relationship of current agricultural policy to rural development.

4.1. *The problems and issues of contention in French rural development policy*

Rural development can no longer be said to operate as a wholly distinct public policy domain functioning largely independently of the broader concerns of France's economic, social and political evolution. While this might arguably have been the case in the late 1950s and 1960s when it was essentially an accompanying measure to agricultural modernisation, rural development policy today is, in many ways a critical component to a set of major policy debates that lie at the heart of French polity. Elsewhere, we have suggested that there is little debate upon a distinct rural development policy *per se* at a national level (Buller, 1999). The key issues and contentions within rural development policy relate rather to the manner in which that policy articulates with wider and inter-related debates. To our mind, these might be summarised as follows.

A longstanding concern for the spatial organisation of France and the equitable distribution of the French population, resource use and economic activity. This concern finds expression in the policy of '*Aménagement du territoire*' with which rural development policy has been closely associated since its inception but which has undergone a radical change over the last 10 years following, notably, the 1995 *Loi d'Orientation sur l'Aménagement et le Développement du Territoire* (LOADT).

Political decentralisation and the appropriate territorial division of France, with the associated division of political and financial responsibilities. The recent political history of France has been dominated by concern for the future organisation of the French unitary state, from the 1992 *Loi d'Orientation sur l'Administration Territoriale de la République* (ATR) to the 1999 *Loi d'Orientation sur l'Aménagement et du Développement Durable du Territoire* (LOADDT). Decentralisation, intercommunality and local partnerships are all part of the emerging, and still largely untested, forms of local governance through which rural development policy and territorial management is increasingly being created, implemented and evaluated.

An agricultural sector which, though of high economic potential in certain areas, is nonetheless suffering from a demographic and territorial crisis, particularly in the more marginal rural regions where farming is still a major employment sector and the dominant user of land. Recreating the links between farming and the wider rural economy and social fabric and, in doing so, finding alternative and socially acceptable forms of farm support, has recently become a major objective of French agricultural policy, following the 1999 *Loi d'Orientation Agricole* (LOA)

The shifting social demands of the majority urban French population with respect to rural space. Increasingly, rural areas are being seen in terms of both the various public goods they represent (landscape, environmental, nature and

space) and in terms of the tourism and recreational opportunities they have the potential to offer.

Central to all of these essentially internal debates (to which we return below) is a recognition of the extreme diversity of French rurality. Indeed, it might be argued that no other European state exhibits such a wide range of different rural *milieux* characterised both by highly varied climatic and physical parameters and by very different rural developmental contexts. The rural development issues of the northern cereal plains of the Ile de France are very different from those of the upland grazing areas of the Auvergne. Parts of the Mediterranean south west are, today, confronted with an agricultural retreat and overall population decline whose landscape consequences are considered dramatic. Elsewhere in France, competition for land between farming and urban development at the periphery of many major cities has led to its own forms of marginalisation and rural 'isolation' (for example, Buller and Lenormand, 1999). Between the "*désertification*" of the "*rural profond*" on the one hand and the "*rurbanisation*" of the *Zones de Peuplement Industriel et Urbain* (ZPIU), on the other, French rural development policy is, of necessity, having to respond to an extremely varied set of issues, demands and policy agendas. Addressing the diversity of rural France, recognition of which has come relatively recently in policy terms, challenges many of the classic tenets of French republicanism (Gerbaux, 1993). The conflict between a tradition of central state-managed normative and procedurally dominated universalist public policy and the growing need for a more differential, locally generated project-oriented and partnership-based rural development policy that takes this diversity into account and builds upon it is at the heart of the current debate.

4.2. Rural development, 'Aménagement du territoire' and political decentralisation

4.2.1. The shifting policy context

Since the very first initiatives in rural development, French policy has operated closely within the broad policy frameworks of economic modernisation and '*aménagement du territoire*' or regional spatial planning one of whose earliest missions was to attempt to redress the increasingly wide gulf that separated post war urban France from its rural counterpart, marked by mass outmigration, unproductive agricultural systems and an ageing population deprived, in many areas of basic services and amenities. Policies such as '*Renovation Rurale*' and '*Zones spéciales d'action rurale*', introduced in the 1960s as well as the various initiatives that fell under the generic term '*aménagement rural*' during the 1970s formed part of a broad range of instruments designed to modernise rural France and, in doing so, to achieve a more harmonious and equitable distribution of human and natural resources as well as investment and growth across French space (see above section 2). During this period, the model of *aménagement du territoire*, developed largely under the DATAR, was characterised, on the one hand, by its separation from urban policy and, on the other, by its clear functional role as an accompaniment to the dominant rural project of the time, that of agricultural modernisation.

"The fundamental error of 1967 was to set up a rural planning policy in opposition to urban planning instead of a developing a more global approach bringing together urban centres with their rural hinterlands. This mistake derived from the double influence of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Senate and is explained by the former's sectoral character and by the strength of rural interests in the latter's elected corpus" (Jung, 1994, my translation).

Today, and since the 1980s, the relationship of rural development to *aménagement du territoire* has shifted considerably. Four elements to this shift might be noted. A fifth, the

growing 'Europeanisation' of French rural and territorial development policy, will be dealt with in a subsequent section of this report.

First, in a subtle but all important lexical evolution, the local level policy of '*aménagement rural*' of the 1970s became, during the 1980s, that of '*développement local*' (which, in rural areas, can be considered synonymous with the term '*développement rural*'). The era of State-led national and hierarchical spatial management prerogatives has been replaced by a reinvention of the 'local' both as the territorial focus for development actions and as the forum of development policy making and implementation. This key shift has been prompted, on the one hand, by the relative retreat from the single monolithic agricultural modernisation project and, in consequence, the growing recognition of rural differentiation and, on the other hand, by political decentralisation, enshrined in the series of laws enacted between 1982 and 1984 which transferred considerable policy-making and implementation powers from the State (and, at a local level, the Prefects) to local government at the regional, departmental and communal level. Henceforth, rural development policy is essentially undertaken at the commune (and inter-communal) and department level with the regional level being increasingly responsible for broad territorial cohesion across a wider zone. The State, some have argued, is increasingly disengaging itself from a direct territorial role (Behar and Estebe, 1998)

Second, many of the policies and mechanisms of *aménagement rural*, initially introduced on an experimental basis in the 1970s, have emerged as vital components of contemporary local rural development. The *Contrats de Pays*, introduced in 1975 by the *Comité interministériel d'Aménagement du Territoire* and the *Chartres intercommunales*, introduced in 1983 (replacing the largely ineffectual *Plans d'Aménagement Rural*) were based upon a number of principles that find immediate resonance in contemporary rural development initiatives such as, most notably, the LEADER programme; partnership, local solidarity, the elaboration of local development projects (as opposed to the mere implementation of State planning directives), voluntary initiative and contractualisation.

Table 4.1 The principal instruments of *aménagement rural*

Policy measure	Definition and scope
The <i>Contrats de Pays</i> (1975)	A local development contract whose triple objective concerns reducing rural depopulation, local economic, social and cultural development and the strengthening of local solidarity. An instrument of financial encouragement, the <i>Contrat de Pays</i> , is a series of development projects co-financed by the State.
The <i>Chartres intercommunales</i> (1983)	A planning and orientation document which lays down future action programmes for local development within a defined group of communes.
The <i>Plans d'Aménagement rural</i> (1975-1983)	Local rural plans that include land-use designations with the identification of development projects for which State co-financing is sought.

Third, political decentralisation has undoubtedly been a major element in the emergence of a local rural development agenda within France. The process of decentralisation, however, is an ongoing one; the future territorial organisation of France still being a central political debate today. The transfer of competencies from State to local government in the name of subsidiarity has nonetheless thrown up a number of questions with respect to rural development: what should be the role of the State in the new configuration of local governance ? As France moves away from the classic *Etat providence* model to one of *Etat partenaire*, so the role of State institutions shift towards that of partner, animator and arbiter (ENA, 1994). Are the current State structures and institutions pertinent and relevant to local development, given that most have undergone few, if any substantive changes following decentralisation ? On the side of local government, the political decentralisation of the early 1980s revealed the unworkable fragmentation of French territorial administration and heralded the beginning of the current political movement towards intercommunal groupings (intercommunality). The debate over the division of responsibilities between the traditional and the new forms of territorial organisation continues to have a major impact upon the success, or otherwise, of rural development initiatives.

Fourth, and critically, recent years have also seen a substantial shift in the position of the principal institutional actors charged with the elaboration of planning and development policy at the national level. The 1990s have seen, following the launching of a "great national debate" in 1993 (Ministère de l'Intérieur, 1993; François-Poncet, 1991; Ollier, 1994), the emergence of two major State initiatives in the definition of future '*aménagement du territoire*' policy; the 1995 *Loi d'Orientation sur l'Aménagement et du Développement du Territoire* (LOADT) and the 1999 *Loi d'Orientation sur l'Aménagement et du Développement Durable du Territoire* (LOADDT). The crisis years of French *Aménagement du Territoire* policy, which arguably drew to an end with the publication of the Guichard Report in 1986 (Guichard, 1986), were replaced with a new dynamic which has sought to bring together two formerly distinct concerns, on the one hand, the public policy of, *aménagement du territoire* and, on the other hand, the more fundamental political question of the territorial organisation of the French Republic. In a related shift, that has also characterised the later years of the decade, the national policy of *aménagement du territoire* or broad spatial planning has gradually transformed itself into a local policy of territorial development within which rural development plays a central role.

4.2.2. From '*Aménagement du territoire*' to '*Développement durable du territoire*'

The 1995 LOADT, brought onto the statute books by the then Gaullist Minister for Planning, Charles Pasqua, sought to establish the means to redress the territorial fractures and inequalities that he saw as threatening national unity and the very values of the French Republic (Pasqua, 1993). Having modernised the French economic apparatus during the '*Trentes Glorieuses*', attention was now turning to the modernisation of the French state and territorial apparatus. In part a return of the central State to the planning and development domain following the initial period of decentralisation, in part a reaffirmation of the Gaullist concern for equality of opportunities within the French territory, the contribution of the 1995 LOADT to rural development policy might be summarised as follows.

On a procedural level, the LOADT introduced and reinforced a series of positive discrimination measures designed to encourage economic development in marginal rural regions. Based upon a longstanding tradition (such as the Less Favoured Areas policy in the 1970s and the *Zones rurales d'intervention prioritaire* and the areas eligible for the *Prime d'Aménagement du Territoire* or PAT), the 1995 Law identifies the '*Territoires ruraux de développement prioritaire*' (TRDP), essentially the areas covered by EU Objective 5b and Objective 2 policy at the time, with a population of some 13 million. Within the TRDP areas, a second category of zone, the *Zones de Revitalisation Rurale* (ZRR), were also anticipated by

article 52 of the Law. These were to be areas characterised by rural population decline, of low population density and by an above average dependency upon agriculture. For both, a series of essentially fiscal measures (such as, most commonly, exoneration of employment tax) was to be made available to encourage rural economic development. Unfortunately, little has been done since the passing of the Law to actually implement any of these new zoning policies. In addition, the law introduced a series of broad national planning schemas and a new source of co-funding, the *Fonds National d'Aménagement et du Développement du Territoire* (FNADT)

More fundamentally, the 1995 Law took the notion of the '*Pays*', already a feature in local development policy via the *Contrats de Pays*, introduced in 1975, and to some extent anticipated by the 1992 *Loi sur l'Organisation Territoriale de la République*, and institutionalised these voluntary and partnership-based forms of territorial cooperation as the principal units of local development policy-making³. Hence, through the *Pays*, the Pasqua Law altered the rules governing local development initiatives by, first, freeing those initiatives from the strict confines of existing administrative structures, second, by extending the opportunities for local level partnership with social and economic actors and with local NGOs, third, by seeking to resolve the classic division between town and country development policies by making each *Pays* an ensemble comprised of a town and its rural hinterland and, fourth, by encouraging the establishment not only of local development projects but also of innovative structures and mechanisms to bring them about.

The 1999 *Loi d'Orientation sur l'Aménagement et Développement Durable du Territoire* was introduced four years later by Dominique Voynet, the Ecology Party Minister of the newly fused Environment and Planning ministries. The LOADDT, like its predecessor, places considerable emphasis upon the *Pays* as the key territorial components of future local (including rural) development policy. However, not only does it take the concept of the *Pays* considerably further than the 1995 Law (which yielded only 42 experimental *Pays*) but it also seeks to frame territorial development policy within a wider agenda that takes on board notions of sustainability and European Structural Fund reform. Critically, the LOADDT redefines the modus-operandi of local development and its relationship to State territorial planning objectives. Today, the focus is very much on locally generated development projects brought to fruition through contractual relations between local government and local partners on the one hand, and the State on the other. The *Pays* are territories that do not necessarily conform to existing administrative units but represent a coherent development project. Moving definitively away from top-down, State-led national planning, still present in the 1995 Law at its National Schema, the LOADDT represents a shift from "a problematic of supply to the analysis of need, from a logic of subventions to one of projects" (Voynet, 2000).

The specific measures introduced by the 1999 Law with respect to rural development concerns can be summarised as follows:

- The LOADDT greatly extends the geography of the *Pays*. Currently some 100 are in the course of being set up within rural France and a further 350 are in the planning stage
- The Law clarifies the relationship of *Pays* to other territorial development structures such as, most notably, the *Parcs naturels régionaux* (PNR) and other forms of commune grouping such as, notably, the new *Communautés d'Agglomération*.

³ Ignoring, for the moment, the historical usage of the word *Pays* in France, a *Pays* today can be defined (following the 1995 LOADDT) as a culturally homogenous rural area defined by local actors and conveying a distinct and identifiable sense of geographic, cultural, economic and social cohesion around which a local development project is constructed. The *Pays* are not new administrative nor political structures, but are territorial and community based planning and development project areas.

- The law seeks to tighten up the procedures associated with the creation of the *Pays* and the role of the Regional authority in coordinating *Pays* actions and makes it possible for local actors to link them to existing intercommunal forms⁴.
- Henceforth, an individual *Pays*, having produced its Charter, can directly seek State co-funding for their projects through the *Contrats de Plan Etat Region*, the basic mechanisms for State investment in regional and sub-regional development.
- For each *Pays*, the creation of a specific structure of local partnership (the *Conseils de développement*) becomes mandatory.
- Although the LOADDT reduces the eligibility thresholds for the *Prime d'Aménagement du Territoire*⁵, it also reduces the number of eligible areas (partly in anticipation of changes in the EU Structural Fund policy following the adoption of Agenda 2000). To compensate the impact of this reduction, particularly in marginal rural areas, the Law maintains and seeks to reinforce the, as yet un-implemented, *Zones de Revitalisation Rurale* and *Territoires ruraux de développement prioritaire* introduced in 1999. Furthermore, through the *Pays* and the *Contrats de Plan Etat Region*, the LOADDT seeks to shift funding to the regional envelopes rather than State/DATAR credits.
- The LOADDT replaces the National Planning and Development Schema (SNADT) of the 1995 Law with a series of Public Service Plans (SSC), one of which is intended to deal with 'Rural and Natural Spaces'. Regional planning documents (SRADT) are required to be compatible with the new public service documents.
- Finally, the 1999 legislation introduces a new source of public funding, the *Fonds de Gestion des Milieux Naturels* and seeks to revive the largely moribund *Fonds de Gestion de l'Espace Rural*.

4.2.3. Issues and contentions

Local development, whether it be in the less favoured rural areas of France or the peripheral housing estates of major urban agglomerations has, to some extent, replaced national territorial management as a central focus of French policy. That this involves a shift from top-down hierarchical policy implementation to 'bottom-up' locally defined projects is evident. That this also involves a fundamental shift in the role of the central State also appears inevitable. Few of these changes however, have been driven by purely rural concerns. Indeed, rural development has been caught up in a more general set of issues that, as we have seen, go to the very heart of the French republican project. It is not surprising therefore that specifically rural actors and interests, from the agricultural profession to rural mayors and entrepreneurs have, over the last few years, sought to define a set of identifiable rural responses to these propositions and policy shifts. Some of these responses relate to the role and future function of farming and, as such, will be addressed in the following section of this

⁴ For example, a *Syndicat Mixte* or an *Etablissement public de coopération intercommunale*, both tried and tested forms of intercommunality. The Law also allows *Pays* to be formed around a *Groupement d'Intérêt Public*, a more innovative, but more complex structure.

⁵ Within the eligible areas, defined by the DATAR according to a set of demographic and economic criteria, local government (the communes) are offered State funding to compensate them for the loss of Employment Tax from which new firms moving into the area are temporarily exonerated. Under the 1995 Law, the area covered by PAT eligibility concerned around 40% of the French population. Under the distribution proposed by the LOADDT, this would be reduced to 34%.

report. Others, meanwhile, relate to the future place of rural development and to the strengthening of the various *acquis* of some 20 years of *développement local*.

A critical component to the new styles of rural governance, increasingly seen as necessary for effective local development, is the establishment of inclusive forms of local partnership. In many rural areas, formalising public-private partnership is a new political territory that implicitly challenges many of the dominant sectoral and institutional frameworks that have, to date, so characterised the French local State. Inevitably perhaps, local elected officials, drawn either from the *communes*, the *département* or from intercommunal structures, continue to dominate the new structures of rural development, such as the *Pays* or the LEADER Local Action Groups. While the new LOADDT makes the setting up of a local consultative group a mandatory feature in the creation of a *Pays*, there is considerable debate over who should be part of this body and what its ultimate responsibility should be. Furthermore, and somewhat paradoxically, as a number of observers have pointed out, the proposal under the LOADDT to use existing intercommunal forms as the basic administrative structure for the *Pays*, in strengthening the place of local councillors, is likely to exclude socio-professional actors and local interest groups (Leurquin, 1999). In response, Transrural Express has recently launched an appeal to all local development actors to lobby for their inclusion on the local consultative groups. However, the persistently central role played by local elected officials in these emerging rural development structures should not necessarily be seen as a criticism. Indeed, one of the unquestionable successes of the new forms of intercommunality in France (the *Pays* and the *Districts*) has been to strengthen local territorial adhesion by getting these traditionally independent communal structures to talk to each other and to work together toward a common goal.

A second area of current contention is that hoary old chestnut of French territorial politics, the relationship of town to country. The reinvention of the *Pays* as the basic territorial foci of rural development initiatives and the parallel emergence of the '*Communautés d'agglomération*' (under the *Loi Chevènement* of 1999), coupled with the reduction in the number of rural areas eligible for the *Prime d'Aménagement du Territoire*⁶ has created, for certain observers, a sense of polarisation and differential treatment particularly amongst rural Senators (for example, Sénateur Arnaud, Sénat, 1999). "Are the *Pays* reserved for the countryside" asks the *Assemblée des Communes de France* (ACF, 1999). Inevitably, by relating local development resource allocation to population thresholds, in accordance with EU Structural Fund methodology, urban and industrial areas have received the major part of current budgetary expenditure. The extent to which current policy represents a de-investment from rural areas is far from being proved. Indeed, part of the innovative rationale behind the *Pays* policy is the coupling of town and country in a coherent development territory that acknowledges the interlinkages and interdependence of both often within the context of a local employment basin; previous rural development policy (and to a large extent, Objective 5b policy) having been frequently criticised for largely ignoring the towns lying within rural regions (see above). It nonetheless remains to be seen to what extent the rural components of the *Pays* will benefit from specific development actions rather than the knock-on effects of more traditional actions.

Although the *Pays*, and their predecessors, the *Contrats de Pays*, today constitute the flagship components of territorial development policy, they are not the only instruments available. The fear of many local development actors is that these other forms will eventually be subsumed into the *Pays* approach. Of particular concern here are the LEADER territories and the *Parcs Naturels Régionaux* (PNR). Both represent innovative local level rural development actions and both have enjoyed considerable success (Dower et al. 1999; Buller, 2000). However, while Dominique Voynet (Minister of Spatial Planning and the

⁶ The *Prime d'Aménagement du Territoire*, originally introduced in 1982, is a public subvention offered by the State to companies to encourage them to relocate from central urban to certain rural locations.

Environment) has gone to considerable lengths to stress her commitment to the PNR (not only by approving new PNR but also by altering the LOADDT to allow for a greater and more coherent articulation between them and the *Pays*), the State planning agency DATAR clearly sees the current LEADER II territories as future *Pays*. At a recent LEADER seminar, the DATAR, the French regional planning agency responsible for the overall coordination of LEADER and other EU structural fund policies, referred to the '*Pays*' policy as representing "a transfer or appropriation of the LEADER area-based approach" (DATAR, 1999) and already a number of LEADER schemes have been subsumed into the emerging *Pays*. The concern here is two fold. On the one hand, the co-existence at the local level of *Pays* and LEADER schemes is likely to add a further dimension to the acknowledged territorial confusion and competition associated with the French implementation of European (Objective 5b and LEADER schemes) and national (regional and national rural planning and aid scheme designations) area-based policies (Lévy, 1996; Jouen, 1999). On the other hand, and given recent changes to the eligibility regulations for LEADER territories following Agenda 2000, which effectively remove the requirement that proposed LEADER + schemes lie within the new designated Objective 2 areas, there is a fear a tendency will emerge for LEADER to become a mechanism for maintaining aid levels to *Pays* within de-designated former Objective 5b rural areas (Vilboux, 1999).

The 1990s have seen the creation of a variety of new forms of intercommunality to accompany political decentralisation, the establishment of the *Pays*, the setting up of LEADER territories, the implementation of Structural Fund reform, the growing role of the French départements and regions in area-based territorial designations in addition to the emergence of new territorial initiatives by other public agencies (such as the various *contrats* operated by the *Agences d'Eau*, the *conseils généraux* and so on). The impression, even in the early 1990s was of a "multiplicity of interventions lacking both a coherent overall architecture and a strategy shared out amongst the different actors" (ENA, 1993). Evaluation of the French implementation of EU structural policy has similarly identified confusion in the duplication of territorial designations and zones (CEC DGVI, 1999, p.14). In a number of rural regions, LEADER territories, ZRR, TDRP, PAT and Contrat de Plan programmes overlap and combine with PNR, *Pays*, and other territorial development configurations. Does current policy redress the balance and bring an "overall architecture" to this increasingly dense mosaic? While it has shifted the balance away from nationally imposed designations (though these are still present) towards locally generated policy spaces, this has arguably increased the number of potential actors. Given the acknowledged diversity of rural France implicit in *Pays* policy approach, a double logic emerges, a multiplication of development strategies on the one hand, and a centralisation of financial control on the other.

A final interrogation concerns the emphasis on projects. In a recent address to the National Assembly (the French Parliament), the French Minister of Spatial Planning and the Environment claimed that "there are no condemned territories, there are only territories without projects" (Voynet, 1999), a variation on the assertion, forwarded by Kayser et al. (1994, 15) that it is "projects which make territories". This recalls the old adage that 'help comes to those that help themselves', as state funding is increasingly focused on those areas and onto those structures that have a proven administrative and human capacity to deliver desired policy outcomes. Eager to do away with the traditional notion of compensating disadvantaged rural regions marked by structural and socio-economic handicaps from having failed to benefit from the fruits of modernisation, the new thrust of development policy insists more on positive discrimination for the territories that 'can' rather than on derogation for those that 'cannot' (Behar and Estebe, 1997). Central to the success of this liberalist approach is the existence, as Jollivet (1985, my translation) puts it, of a "new rural middle class, in search of identity and of power and needing to create a lively and dynamic sense of the local". Yet, this new rural middle class is not (yet) an ubiquitous component of French rurality. Indeed, many remoter rural areas are still characterised by the absence of an alternative rural clientele whose existence appears to be becoming the sine

qua non for endogenous rural development projects. Certainly, an emerging generation of local development officers and workers have joined the ranks of the rural policy community at the local level (Chosson, 1990) but the future status of these rural areas lying beyond the *Pays*, the PNR and the LEADER territories is perhaps less sure.

4.3. Rural development and agriculture

In 1997, the then Minister of Agriculture stated: "*Sans l'agriculture, c'est la mort de nos campagnes mais sans les services dans nos campagnes c'est la mort de l'agriculture*"⁷. For many, agriculture remains a defining force in rural economic and social organisation. As such, rural development policy and state investment in rural areas should address, first and foremost, the various territorial, social, economic and environmental issues associated not only with agricultural decline and withdrawal but also with the positive contribution farming can make in sustaining rural communities. Far from receding in the face of an increasingly diversified and plural countryside, in which farmers are increasingly a demographic and economic minority, this notion is, if anything, gaining in currency, fed by a wider concern within the agricultural policy community for the future of agricultural support.

4.3.1. The policy context

Agricultural modernisation

French rural policy has always been closely associated to the process of agricultural development. Rural development was agricultural development. The vast rural project of the 1960s, enshrined in the 1960 *Loi d'Orientation Agricole* and in the early years of the CAP, was to create a greater degree of equality between town and country, between the economic role and legitimacy of the farmer and that of the industrial worker, between the amenities, incomes and living conditions of those living and working in rural areas with those in the towns and cities. Furthermore, rural planning, through instruments such as *remembrement* or policies such as '*Renovation rurale*' sought to create the conditions for agricultural modernisation. These two strands, urban/industrial and rural/agricultural were woven together into a single State-driven modernist and egalitarian agenda. This was an undoubted success. State investment in the infrastructures and services of rural areas, on the one hand, and in agricultural modernisation, on the other (through the mechanisms of the CAP), have largely redressed the balance and have made French agriculture into one of the strongest (albeit one of the most financially supported) of all European farm sectors.

However, agricultural modernisation has been accompanied by (and has been, to a large extent, predicated upon) a series of important changes in French rural areas that have, in more recent years, emerged as central rural development concerns. The first of these has been rural depopulation. The population of many areas of rural France has experienced a continuous decline for the last 40 years. Although the 1999 Census reveals overall rural population growth, many remoter rural areas, particularly those characterised by low density livestock-based agricultural production, continue to experience net population outmigration. Maintaining a rural population (such as through the Ministry of Agriculture's *zones spéciales d'action rurale* introduced in 1960) in such areas has been a longstanding goal of rural development policy (Gadant, 1987). The second has been a processes of agricultural "de-territorialisation". Regional production specialisation, encouraged under the CAP has separated agricultural production from its local territorial base within rural areas. Although

⁷ 'Without agriculture, it will be the death of our countryside. But without services, it will be the death of farming' (my translation).

this is identified as a general European trend, it has a particular impact in a country like France where agriculture has traditionally played such a key role in territorial solidarity.

*"L'agriculture européenne en préférant la filière au territoire, participe à ce mouvement de rupture entre économie d'une part, territoire et société de l'autre, rupture de l'équilibre traditionnel qui a fondé un mode de vie et une civilisation"*⁸

E. Pisani and B. Hervieu, *Le Monde*, 12, March 1996

Third, in transforming rural France into a monofunctional agricultural France, agricultural modernisation gave rise to corporatist policy-making and institutional hegemony that has both subsumed rural development processes and focused almost exclusively upon the primacy of agricultural production. In doing so, it limited (though rarely directly) the effectiveness of alternative rural development trajectories, other than in those areas close to major towns and cities where urban concentration and expansion have exercised a priority claim on land.

This commonality of agricultural and rural development objectives began to break down in the 1970s for reasons that have been well analysed elsewhere (Houée, 1989). As rural development, as a public policy domain, began to assert its relative autonomy from the agricultural project of France, new policy objectives, new mechanisms and new structures began to emerge. We do not intend to examine all of these here (see above, section 4.1.1). Suffice to say that the opening up of the rural development policy agenda in the 1970s, to include industrial deconcentration, the emergence of local development initiatives, rural environmental infrastructure provision, rural tourism projects and rural housing renovation accompanied a growing sense of crisis in the productivist model of agriculture. Political decentralisation reinforced this autonomy in that it transferred considerable local development powers and initiatives to communal authorities who, traditionally, had little or no role to play in agricultural policy making nor implementation which remained, and arguably remains, highly centralised and dependant upon its own distinct set of local level actors and support structures. The growing importance of the Ministry of Equipment (Land Use Planning and Infrastructure, created in the late 1960s) in rural areas might also be considered part of this institutional shift. Finally, the growing separation of agricultural development (characterised by a productivist rationale, widescale labour shedding, increased farm unit sizes, production chains that were increasingly de-localised and the Europeanisation of policy and financial support) from rural change (an expanding non agricultural population in many regions, economic diversification associated with the increasing tertiarisation of the economy and socio-economic recomposition, not only of the rural population but also of its political representatives, traditionally drawn from the agricultural sector) meant that, henceforth, rural development policy and agricultural policy were largely addressing different territorial imperatives, different economic rationales and different clientele.

Agri-environmental policy

Recent years, however, have seen the onset of a series of moves to reintegrate agriculture as an economic, territorial and social component of the broader countryside and thus to bridge the widening gap between the two rural policy domains (Souchon, 1985). Initiated, in part, by the incoming Socialist administration under the Presidency of François Mitterand in the early 1980s, these moves were prompted by a series of concerns ranging from increasing recognition of the social and environmental consequences of agricultural modernisation and the perpetual question of agricultural depopulation to the need to

⁸ "In preferring the production chain to the territory, European agriculture has contributed to this rupture between the economy, on the one hand, and society and territory on the other; a rupture of a traditional balance that has founded both a way of life and a civilisation" (my translation).

encourage agricultural pluri-activity (Eizner, 1985; Jollivet, 1988). More recently, the need both to find socially and politically acceptable means of conserving existing levels of agricultural support, and to redress what was seen by many within the French agricultural policy community as too reductionist a vision of farming at the 1996 Cork Conference, has been added to this list.

France came late to the first generation of agri-environmental policy mechanisms, introduced by Article 19 of EU Regulation 797/85 (Boisson and Buller, 1996; Buller and Brives, 2000), introducing only 61 small ESAs (having an average size of 3,000 ha) with a total eligible area of only 205,200 ha (81,445 of which was under agreement by the end of 1993, CNASEA, 1993).

However, although they did not represent a major change of direction for French agricultural policy, the early agri-environmental measures did nonetheless prepare the political ground for a more comprehensive agri-environmental programme following Regulation 2078/92. They reinforced the role of local actors in the elaboration of local agricultural policy (Alphandéry, 1998) by allowing farmers to take a more active role in establishing a territorial policy for agricultural management (Alphandéry and Deverre, 1994). Furthermore, and crucially, the early measures introduced the notion of contractualisation hitherto virtually unknown to the agricultural profession. Accustomed to unconditional agricultural support systems, the idea of voluntarily engaging to respect a set of obligations and thereby receiving premiums linked to compliance was, initially, a difficult concept to get across. It remains, to this day, a controversial issue and one that limits the wider application of agri-environmental measures. Finally, the early Article 19 measures provided France with an important negotiating position during the discussions over CAP reform and its accompanying measures. The centre piece of the subsequent programme, the grassland premium, can thereby be seen as an inspired juxtaposition of the classic French agri-environmental preoccupation, rural desertification, and the need to redistribute agricultural support.

Ultimately, French agri-environmental policy remained, at least until 1994, focused first, upon land that was essentially marginal to agricultural production and second upon agricultural, rather than environmental management styles. In this, Article 19 policy, though it clearly had an important impact within specifically sensitive zones, such as the Crau in Provence (Deverre, 1998) or the Marais Poitevin, (Billaud, 1994) or in those broader areas where designated zones were integrated into other rural management structures such as national or regional parks, has been perhaps less successful in challenging the longstanding policy separation that has characterised the French approach to agriculture and the environment since the 1960s.

The agri-environmental measures introduced following EU Regulation 2078/92 can be divided into three central elements: the national grassland premium for the maintenance of extensive husbandry; the 'regional programmes' which include seven standard measures broadly corresponding to the agri-environmental actions identified in Regulation 2078/92, and the 'local operations' which are specifically targeted or 'zonal' schemes established locally or regionally (Buller and Brives, 2000).

During the 1993-1998 period, the grassland premium, introduced in 1993, accounted for around three quarters of the annual agri-environmental budget (227 MECU out of a total of 300 MECU), despite the fact that the premium payment (300 Francs or 46 ECU per year) is one of the lowest agri-environmental payments available. As a broad and shallow agri-environmental measure, the grassland premium has been an undoubted success. By 1998,

some 102, 000 contracts had been established covering a total area of some 5,4 million hectares (nearly 20% of the French UAA) at a total annual cost of around 1.3 billion Francs.

At the end of 1995, the local and regional operations had an allocated budget nationally of 45 MECU (57% of the total agri-environmental budget to that time excluding the grassland premium). This might be compared to the Article 19 budget which never rose beyond 15 MECU. By the end of 1997, some 250 'local operations' had been approved by the Star Committee. The total surface targeted via the 52,000 contracts under these schemes amounts to over 900,000 hectares (and 35,000 livestock units) by 1998, for a total annual expenditure of around 578 million francs. The local and regional operations addressed a wide range of agri-environmental issues and conditions and, in doing so, varied considerably in their size and financial envelopes. By 1997, some 67% (8576) of established contracts concerned wildlife and ecosystem protection schemes, the bulk falling in the west and north of the country (Pays de la Loire, Poitou Charentes, Haute Normandie), while 26% (3386 contracts) concerned the maintenance of low intensive farming practices in regions threatened by land abandonment, notably the southern regions of Languedoc Roussillon, Midi-Pyrénées, Rhône Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. By contrast, the intensive agricultural regions of the north (Picardie, Champagne-Ardenne and Ile de France) contain only 12 schemes in total, representing 3.6% of the total area and 5.7% of the total national local operations budget. The 'local operations', more directly comparable to UK ESAs, have proved by far and away the most successful of the sub-national schemes, accounting for around 62% of all contracts. Their emphasis upon distinct local territories, and the fact that they are drawn up locally with contractual obligations often tailored to meet local circumstances, have made local operations relatively popular amongst both farming communities and environmental interests at the local level (Buller and Lenormand, 1999). They address a wide range of environmental, territorial and agricultural contexts across France, far wider than their predecessors, the Article 19 zones emerging from EU Regulation 797/85. Around 67% have been established to protect wildlife and local ecosystems, mainly in the west and north of France, while a further 27% are concerned with the maintenance of low intensity and environmentally friendly farming systems threatened either by abandonment or by intensification (Buller and Brives, 2000).

The Plans de Développement Durable

In parallel to the agri-environmental measures established under EU Regulation 2078/92, France also introduced in 1995 an experimental domestic scheme (initially wholly State funded) known as the *Plans de Développement Durable* (PDD) or Sustainable Farm Development Plans. Distinct from agri-environmental schemes in that they offered no direct financial support for specific environmentally friendly agricultural activities (nor compensated income foregone), these innovative and entirely voluntary instruments sought to offer farmers a comprehensive advisory and support framework for identifying sustainable strategies for whole-farm development. Following a detailed on-farm survey of environmental constraints and farm development opportunities and the subsequent drawing up of a series of development scenarios, the PDD took the form of a contract specifying individual farm development aids and advisory, support and monitoring assistance from a variety of State and professional organisations.

Although 1200 farms were targeted for the piloting of this scheme, only 750 ultimately accepted PDD contracts due largely to the procedural complexity of the scheme. However, the PDD did introduce a number of important principles. First, they concerned the entire farm. Farmers could not, as was the case with agri-environmental schemes, select to place only part of their farm under contract. Second, the PDD explicitly addressed the

multifunctional aspects of agriculture; agricultural production but also landscape and wildlife management, local employment, rural development, resource protection and territorial identity. Third, the PDD sought to establish an all-embracing framework for agricultural support. Although they did not replace existing forms of support, they did attempt to bring some coherence to the panoply of farm modernisation, employment and environmental support mechanisms that existed. Fourth, the PDD were not static instruments that sought to preserve an existing status quo (a criticism often targeted at agri-environmental schemes) but were farm development strategies. Finally, the PDD sought, where possible and appropriate, to identify and account for the environmental costs of agricultural practices at the farm level.

Today, current French policy has, to some extent come full circle. At least within the context of the French response to the Agenda 2000 package and, particularly EU Regulation 1257/1999, farming lies at the very centre of contemporary rural development policy. In the words of the French former Director General of Agriculture at the European Commission: "agricultural policy is an element of rural policy and the maintenance of a sufficient number of farmers is a necessary condition for rural development" (Legras, quoted in François-Poncet, 1991).

4.3.2. *"Rather a neighbour than more land"*⁹: Agriculture's policy contribution to rural development policy

Section 2 of the current report has already identified the principal French provisions for the implementation of the EU Rural Development Regulation 1257/1999 as contained within the Draft National Rural Development Plan. As we have already demonstrated, agriculture plays a central role in this Plan which is explicitly farm-oriented. Although the Plan acknowledges that rural areas are no longer defined solely by agricultural activities, agriculture is still considered to play a preponderant role for a number of reasons:

- Agricultural and forestry activities and forms of land use remain productive activities but, in their nature and their means, they increasingly take into account other functions and concern for sustainability;
- The demand for multifunctionality is particularly addressed to agriculture, the food industry and to forestry
- Although farmers and foresters have lost much of their importance demographically and as a source of employment, they remain significant in the remoter rural regions which cover around a third of the national territory and whose quality depends primarily upon agricultural and forestry management (adapted from the draft *Plan de développement rural national*, 1999, p.42).

The 1999 *Loi d'Orientation Agricole*, which emerged in parallel to the Agenda 2000 package, specifically sought to balance the economic, environmental and social functions of farming in addition to promoting new forms of rural management and protecting rural space within a broad sustainable development objective. That Law, through diverse means, seeks:

- to maintain the agricultural population within rural areas both by encouraging the installation of young farmers and by developing agricultural employment;
- to promote the quality and the diversity of agricultural produce

⁹ Slogan at the *Etats Généraux du Développement Agricole*, May 1982 to February 1983.

- to enhance the relationship of agricultural production to territorial specificity by promoting systems of production adapted to local potential
- to maintain the conditions favourable to agricultural activities in upland and mountain regions
- to achieve a more equitable distribution of public aids to farming across the national territory.

The key innovation of the 1999 Act, and the principal vehicle for the achievement of many of the rural development objectives laid down in EU Regulation 1257/1999 are the *Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation* (CTE) which, as voluntary whole-farm development contracts, seek not only to promote agricultural multifunctionality but also to bring agricultural policy into line with that of the *Pays* and *aménagement du territoire* (see above, section 4.1.1.) and with the "*Schema de services collectifs des espaces naturels et ruraux*" (see below, section 4.1.3). The CTE combine on-farm environmental objectives (through the agri-environmental measures), farm modernisation (through infrastructural aid, structural measures such as early retirement and the promotion of high-value added production systems) and rural development actions (essentially employment maintenance and creation, partly through aids for the installation of young farmers), the whole in a coherent local territorial agenda that is defined by local actors and tailored to suit local circumstances.

Strongly influenced by their immediate predecessors, the local agri-environmental measures and the PDD, the CTE are, in fact, made up of two dimensions: a socio-economic dimension, whose primary aims are to secure, through grant aid and co-financing measures, the sustainable development of the farm, to promote local employment generation and to generate additional income through the development of quality products, through farm diversification and investment and through the modification of existing practices; and an environmental and territorial dimension which incorporates the former agri-environmental schemes operated under EU Regulation 2078/92 but goes on to include broader rural and resource management operations (Table 4.2). Participating farmers have to include elements from both dimensions in their contractual engagements in order to be eligible for public funding.

Each of the French *départements* has been asked to draw up different CTE types relating to varied farming systems and territorial, environmental and/or economic prerogatives. The CTE, which will be used in different priority categories under the Rural Development Plan, but notably part of categories A ('multifunctional agriculture') and D ('maintaining the territorial balance'), will account for around 35% of the total budget (in the region of 4.3 billion Francs with an additional 1 billion coming from the modulation of Direct Payments) allocated to implementing the Rural Development Regulation (Table 4.3 and 4.4).

Table 4.2 The two dimensions of the CTE

Socio-economic dimension		Territorial and environmental dimension	
Theme	Objective	Theme	Objective
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and create employment • Facilitate the installation of young farmers • Help farm inheritance 	Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve water quality • Improve water resource management
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt farmer competencies and qualifications • Improve working conditions 	Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent soil erosion • Preserve the physical, chemical and biological fertility of soils
Product quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve product quality • Improve food health security 	Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve air quality
Animal well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the well being of farm animals 	Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect natural species and biotopes • Preserve and improve the biodiversity of domestic species
Economy, autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the economic organisation of producers • Diversify farm and non-farm activities • Improve food marketing and transformation systems and networks • Increase the added value by reducing production costs and making more sustainable use of natural resources 	Landscapes and cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve and benefit from the built heritage • Preserve and benefit from landscape quality
		Natural risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent erosion, flooding, fires and avalanches
		Energie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce energy consumption • Develop the use of renewable energy sources

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, (2000b)

Table 4.3 Budget allocations under the Rural Development Plan by category

Figures in Millions of Euros, situation in December 1999.

	2000		Total 2000-2006	
	Total	EU	Total	EU
Multifunctional agriculture	617.63	308.82	5 065.48	2 532.74
Forestry development	32.72	13.09	434.08	173.63
High value added production	507.93	89.93	3 631.04	654.79
Maintaining the territorial balance	68.51	297.38	5 187.72	2 383.74
- CTE measures	367.57	156.13	2 241.88	975.54
- LFA measures	385.70	134.54	2 839.13	1 361.25
Protecting the ecological heritage	9.02	3.66	275.41	124.43
Training	8.54	4.27	116.78	58.39
Total	1 944.35	717.14	14 710.51	5 927.73

Source: from the *Plan de Développement rural national*, 2000.

Table 4.4. Relationship of the CTE to the Rural Development Regulation

RDR Regulation	Implementation in France			
Accompanying measures				
Agri-environment: Sunflower scheme Grassland premium All other schemes	CTE			National measure National measure
LFA Compensatory allowances				Régime indemnitaire handicaps naturels
Farm woodland schemes				National
Early retirement	CTE			
Other measures				
Farm investment	CTE	PAM		
Training				National measure
Processing and marketing				National measure
Other forest measures	CTE			
Young farmers		DJA		
Article 33 measures				
Land improvement and reparation		SAFER		FGMN
Farm relief and management services				Not implemented by PRDN
Marketing quality products	CTE			
Basic services for economy and population				Not implemented as part of PRDN
Renovation of villages and heritage preservation	CTE			
Diversification of agricultural activities	CTE			
Agricultural water resource management	CTE			
Development and improvement of infrastructure for agriculture				Not implemented as part of PRDN
Encouragement of tourism and craft activities				Not implemented as part of PRDN
Environment protection and animal welfare	CTE		FGMN	LIFE
Restoring agricultural production after natural disasters				DOCUP Obj 2
Financial engineering				Not implemented as part of PRDN

Source: compiled by the author from diverse sources

4.3.3. *Issues and contentions*

The *Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation* have emerged as a highly innovative attempt to translate notions of agricultural multifunctionality into the practice of agricultural support. As such, they have been widely accepted by the majority of rural interests within France including the environmental lobby, the agricultural profession and local civic society. Certain observers suggest that they might be a model for future EU agricultural policy in that they both combine the objectives of multifunctionality and respond to an identified need to justify and legitimise agricultural support to both the wider (and largely urban) European population and to external trading partners. The CTE undoubtedly take the agri-environment scheme approach further forward by coupling additional components relating to the wider rural society and economy. They also build upon the contract as the central mechanism for agricultural support. For some agricultural interests, they represent an additional complication in a profession already over-complicated by administrative necessities. From a review of different responses and positions with respect to the CTE, the following points might be made.

The CTE are ultimately founded upon a longstanding assumption, one that has, in many other rural regions within Europe, long proved to be either false or irrelevant, following rural socio-economic recomposition; the well being of rural areas depends largely upon the well-being of agriculture. To what extent is this a generalisable assumption? While it might be appropriate for areas threatened demographically, economically and environmentally by agricultural retreat (still a very real concern in much of rural France) is it the case for areas already characterised by a more differentiated rurality? By defining the 'second pillar' as a largely agricultural one, is there not the risk that non-agricultural actors will be excluded from benefiting from EU Rural Development Policy? As we have sought to demonstrate elsewhere, the CTE approach to agricultural multifunctionality contrasts strongly with the British notion of rural multifunctionality (Lowe, Buller and Ward 2000).

One of the critical innovations of the CTEs, again building on from the OLAE (*Opérations locales agri-environnement* or local agri-environmental schemes akin to local ESAs), is their clear 'bottom-up' approach. The majority of CTE contracts are territorially or farm-system specific and are designed and drawn up locally by groups of actors including the farming profession, environmental interests, local government and local economic actors through the *Commission Départementale d'Orientation Agricole* (CDOA). This approach proved very successful with agri-environmental schemes under Regulation 2078/92. However, the CTE have a much wider brief that goes beyond the definition of environmentally friendly farm management practices. Will a similarly diverse set of actors and interests contribute as effectively to what will be the creation of local agricultural policies, a hitherto relatively closed-off domain of national corporatism and co-management?

The CTE are firmly anchored in the notion of territory, a notion that, in agriculture, has lost much of its value. One reason for this particular focus has been the need to achieve a more coherent pattern of contractualisation than was the case with the former agri-environmental measures. As a result, many different CTE types have been drawn up at the local level, reflecting particular production systems and/or landscape types. The reaction of the European Commission to the initial propositions was critical of what was perceived to be an extremely fragmented policy instrument lacking overall coherence. Although the CTE have subsequently been simplified, the problem of territorial coherence to some extent remains. Indeed, environmental bodies like the *Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux* (LPO) have questioned the "definition" of territory as it appears in the CTE.

For many individual farmers, the overall rationale of the CTE remains unclear. The *Centre National de Jeunes Agriculteurs* (CNJA), while strongly supporting the CTE as an idea,

denounces what it sees as a strengthening of the "logique de guicheton"¹⁰ which "kills our desire to work [as farmers] ". The danger is that the CTE appear more as an *à la carte* list of possible grants and financial aid, in return for specific actions, rather than, as is their intention, a framework for a coherent and genuine shift in the role of farming within the countryside.

Finally, we might ask to what degree the CTE can bring about a real sea-change not only in the role of farming within rural development and to farmers' own motivation and attitudes but also to the overall trajectory of agricultural policy. Agri-environmental measures were accompanying measures to CAP reform in 1992. In their 8 years of existence, they have not been a major force in driving fundamental changes in European agricultural policy. The central dynamic in European agriculture for many years has been that of concentration. If anything, modulation, as it is applied in France, will increase farm sizes and reduce crop rotations amongst modulated farms. The CTE, with their territorial focus, seek to operate in an alternative scenario. To what degree can the two genuinely co-exist without a physical separation, as has been the case with the agri-environmental measures of an 'agri-environment/CTE France' on the one side and a 'Direct Payments, arable France' on the other ? The CTEs are national, in the sense that all *Départments* have drawn up CTE contracts and certain CTEs, like that covering organic farming, are nationally applied. Outside the CTEs, rural development policy is focussed upon the Objective 2 areas. Rural areas falling outside Objective 2 are not a priority.

¹⁰ "logic of the counter" implying that farmers undertake contracted tasks in order to receive money.

5. Challenges for sustainable rural development

The title of the 1999 LOADDT contains the words '*développement durable du territoire*' (sustainable territorial development). To what extent does this represent a genuine shift in the orientation of French territorial planning policy towards environmentally as well as economically sustainable goals? Similarly, to what degree can the CTE, as the primary vehicles for the PDRN extend, in their environmental, economic and territorial impacts, beyond the farm gate? In this section of the report, we consider the application of sustainable principles to current policy.

Contemporary French rural development policy, as the last section has demonstrated, has sought to move away from the classic fields of interventionism that include infrastructural and service provision and investment aid and tax relief to local firms. Although these fields continue to be important, particularly in the LEADER programme and in Objective 5b and now Objective 2 policy, new development paradigms have emerged over the last 10 years, to become enshrined in current policy objectives. The integration of environmental concerns into rural development strategies is not new, it has been the underlying premise of the *Parcs naturels régionaux* since their creation in 1967. The new rural development policy currently being drawn up and implemented in France approaches sustainability concerns through a series of mechanisms but most notably through the agri-environmental measures contained within the CTE and through specific contractual measures associated with NATURA 2000 policy.

5.1. Multifunctionality and the CTE

One of these, as we have seen above, has been the re-assessment of farming's role in the wider rural environment, economy, society and territory. The CTEs are forwarded very much as mechanisms for achieving a more sustainable French agriculture through a more 'qualitative approach' (Hervieu, 2000). In this alone, they are a considerable step forward from the agri-environmental measures that preceded them and that were frequently limited either to 'add-on' environmental management actions that had little or no articulation with broader farm management or to merely maintaining existing agricultural practices considered 'environmentally friendly'. Within the CTE, agri-environmental actions will become, it is hoped, one component to a wider agri-rural policy agenda; a "good agricultural system" in the words of a representative of France Nature Environnement.

As Tables 4.2 and 4.3 (above) showed, a significant part of the CTE budget will be allocated to agri-environmental measures (with the exception of the grassland premium or PMSEE which has been extended prior to its possible inclusion in the CTE mechanism later on). At the time of writing, the total agri-environmental budget within the PDRN amounts to around 4 000 MEURO for the period 2000-2006, around 2500 MEURO coming from FEOGA/EAGGF. These sums represent around 28% of the total PDRN budget. These figures might be compared to the budget allocations under Regulation 2078/92. For the five-year period under which schemes were operating, some 400 MECU were allocated for regional and local agri-environmental schemes and 1050 MECU to the Grassland Premium or PMSEE (Buller and Brives, 2000). It is, however, far too early to draw any conclusions from this re-coupling of environmental prerogatives to farm development strategies under the CTE. Environmental groups are, on the whole, favourably disposed towards the CTE as a mechanism though remain guarded as to the eventual impact of the scheme, particularly as, in the short term at least, a net reduction in contracted agricultural land may result.

5.2. The environment as a component of rural development

A second development 'paradigm' concerns the extended integration of rural environmental protection into rural development policy. Although France originally embarked rather later than its northern European neighbours on a national policy of rural environmental protection (Jollivet, 1996), the country now counts a wide-ranging set of protected area instruments (see below, Table 5.1), as well as a fully 'Europeanised' corpus of environmental legislation (IFEN, 1998). The initial spatial as well as policy separation of rural environmental protection measures and agricultural development policies that characterised early French environmental designations¹¹ has now been partly addressed both through agri-environmental policy and through measures such as the Programme de Maitrise de Pollutions d'Origine Agricole (PMPOA), Ferti-Mieux, Irri-Mieux and other instruments that seek, largely through voluntary means, to reduce the environmental impact of often intensive farming practices. In part, this albeit limited integration has been prompted by growing scientific as well as popular concern over the extent of agricultural pollution particularly in the cereal regions of the north, many of which overlie large and economically important groundwater sources (as in the Beauce or in Picardie) and the intensive husbandry areas of Brittany where the impermeable granite rock makes water pollution a more immediate concern. In part also, a greater integration of agriculture production and environmental protection has been stimulated by shifting public demand not only for quality foodstuffs, including organic produce, but also for greater traceability in production methods and chains. In so far as they have opened up the agricultural policy community to environmental concerns and have provided a mechanism for engaging farmers in more environmentally friendly techniques, agri-environmental schemes as well as the other instruments mentioned above, have been successful. However, there is some debate as to the extent to which they contribute directly to rural economic development other than in a passive way. Where they have been most successful in this goal is where agri-environmental and other schemes have been linked to the production and commercialisation of particular 'quality' foodstuffs largely through regional product labelling and/or specific production techniques. LEADER schemes, *Parcs Naturels Regionaux*, in addition to a number of local agri-environmental schemes have sought to make the development of 'quality' products and the setting up of specific commercialisation and marketing chains not only a key rural development objective but also synonymous with the maintenance and improvement of environmental standards (Table 5.2).

¹¹ It is notable for example how early measures such as the National Parks and Nature Reserves tended to be located in agricultural marginal areas in the upland/mountain areas or in the Atlantic coastal wetlands.

Table 5.1. Protected areas in France

(This table excludes groundwater protection zones, catchment protection areas and other designations associated with water management)

Measure	Surface (ha)	% of national territory
National Parks	1 258 887	2,31
Protected forests	80 115	0,15
Nature reserves	131 418	0,24
PNR	5 015 302	9,22
Sites classés	2 583 sites	
Arrêtes de biotope	107 120	0,19
Zones ND des POS	7 362 900	13,3
Zones de Protection Spéciale (ZPS)	730 502	1,34
Zones d'Importance Communautaire pour les Oiseaux (ZICO)	4 700 000	8,5
ZNIEFF	13 517 388	22,3
Conservatoire de l'Espace Littoral et des Rivages Lacustres	44 142	0,08
Espaces naturels sensibles	25 000	0,04
Conservatoires régionaux d'espaces naturels	17 167	0,03
Réserves naturelles volontaires	4 054	0,007
Réserves biologiques domaniales	14 200	0,02
Local agri-environmental schemes	770 000	1,4
Grassland premium agri-environmental measure	5 390 000	9,8
Réserves de Chasse et de Faune Sauvage	29 943	0,05
Zones humides d'importance internationale (RAMSAR)	662 035	1,22
Réserves de Biosphère	507 650	0,93
TOTAL ¹	40 367 823	66%

1. Many of these designations overlap so the total figure should be treated with caution

Source: compiled by the author from many different sources

Table 5.2.. Total cost of actions by category within LEADER I schemes in France.

Category of development actions	Cost of development actions undertaken at 31.12. 1995. In millions of Francs	Percentage of total
Rural tourism	580	38%
Local enterprises, crafts industries and services	356	23%
Agriculture and Forestry	216	14%
Technical support	135	12%
Training	61	4%
Operation of LAG	39	3%
Others	86	6%
TOTAL	1 473	100%

Source: CNASEA, 1996.

Taking this one stage further is the commodification of the resulting environmental and landscape amenities through rural tourism and countryside access. Over the last few years, this has become one of the implicit *raison d'être* of the *Parcs naturels régionaux* (Table 5.3 below):

"In 15 years, the PNR have moved towards a new point of convergence, that of rural development, associating economy and ecology. We have moved from an objective that sought to 'protect nature while taking account of local needs' to an objective of 'local rural development taking account of the environment" (Billet, et al., 1982).

Hence this second development 'paradigm' seeks to portray rural areas in terms of the public goods they offer to wider society and to evaluate and ultimately pay for the costs of providing those goods. The *Schéma de services collectifs des espaces naturels et ruraux* (SENR), one of the sectoral schemas currently being drawn up as part of the LOADDT of 1999 recognises that: "*les services collectifs non-marchands d'intérêt général produits par les espaces naturels et ruraux ont une valeur économique, sous forme de coûts évités ou de services distribués, que la société doit reconnaître*" ¹² (Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de l'Environnement, 1999, p.1). Of course, these public goods and services derive from many facets; agricultural and craft activities, forestry, biodiversity, local heritage management and so on. To date, these have been largely treated in a sectoral fashion that has classically opposed agriculture (and other 'economic' activities) to the environment, town to country.

¹² "The un-marketed public goods of general interest of rural and natural spaces have an economic value, in the form of costs foregone or of services rendered, that society must recognise" (my translation).

Table 5.3 Expenditure by sector for four Parcs Naturels Régionaux (1985/1986 - 1993/1995)

	Nature protection	Heritage & Culture	Development & Tourism	Communication
Vercours PNR (1985 - 1995)	9% Planning 23% Protection	nd	36%	16%
Livrados PNR (1986 - 1995)	20%	20%	Tourism 29% Development 26%	0
Ballons des Vosges PNR (1985 - 1995)	50%	27%	13%	10%
Brenne PNR (1990 - 1993)	12%	3%	Tourism 25% Development 17%	33%

Sources: Compiled by the author from various unpublished sources

The SENR (1998) thereby identifies six developmental objectives for rural and natural spaces:

- The strengthening of a global approach to rural territories based upon the notion of multifunctionality;
- Placing the management of rural and natural spaces into an economic logic based upon recognition of their intrinsic economic value and on the improved economic use of the services provided by rural and natural areas (such as agriculture and high quality productions, tourism and so on);
- Responding to a strong social demand for an improved quality of life through access to the countryside, through landscape protection and management, through animal welfare and food traceability;
- Maintain and develop biological diversity through the application of the EU 'Birds' and 'Habitats' Directives and the full Natura 2000 programme in addition to other actions
- Protect natural resources through the appropriate identification of threatened areas and other actions related to water management and soil protection
- Assure the security of goods and people from natural hazards through an effective prevention policy.

The innovation of this approach, which falls within the overall objectives of the LOADDT, is its transversality. Joining environmental protection policy up to agriculture, to local economic development and to territorial re-organisation (through the *Pays* notably) is a specific intention of this particular *Schema de Services Collectifs*.

5.3. Environmental measures

Biodiversity and Natura 2000

France contains an extremely rich flora and fauna (the single Alpes Maritimes département containing as many plant species as the whole of the British Isles). The threats to this biodiversity are similar to those found in other European states, urbanisation, tourism, agriculture, industrial and urban pollution and so on. While some 5% of threatened plant species are found in agricultural areas, some 33% rare or threatened plant species are found in grasslands threatened by agricultural withdrawal and natural recolonisation. For many of these areas, the central problem is maintaining extensive agricultural activities.

Amongst the 6 priorities identified in the National Rural Development Plan (see above Table 4.2), we find the protection of the ecological heritage. Although this only concerns a relatively small proportion of the overall PDRN budget (2%), it is complemented by other policy instruments, most notably those linked to the NATURA 2000 network of designated Special Conservation Zones (ZSC) and Special Protection Zones (ZPS) following the 'Habitats' and 'Birds' Directives respectively. Many of the 1029 ZSC (2.6 million hectares) and 114 ZPS (790 003 ha) are currently farmed or used for forestry and tourism whose maintenance is considered essential for the sustainability of the protected areas. In addition to the sums programmed in the PDRN for the contractualisation of farmers within these zones under the CTE, funds have been allocated from the *Fonds de Gestion des Milieux Naturels* (under the LOADDT) amounting to 10.6 MEURO per year. The objective of the PDRN and the Natura 2000 policy is to see designated, over the next few years, a total of 1 million ha of agricultural land, 800,000 ha of forest land and 800,000 ha of sensitive agricultural or forest land - wetlands, moorland and so on (Ministère de l'Agriculture, 2000a). Within the designated Natura 2000 areas, farmers will be able to benefit from specific contracts under the environmental dimension of the CTE; money from the *Fonds de gestion des milieux naturels* (introduced by the LOADDT of 1999) complementing that allocated to the implementation of the PDRN and the CTE. At the European level, in addition to FEOGA and the RDR, the French Natura 2000 programme will also be part financed by the LIFE II programme (2000-2004).

Of course, a number of key issues remain and indeed could be considered as significant hindrances to the greater integration of rural development and sustainability concerns. One of these has undoubtedly been the problematic implementation in France of the Natura 2000 programme and the designation of appropriate Special Protection Zones.

Table 5.4. Sources of finance used for Natura 2000 sites under Rural Development Regulation

Article 30 and 32 of RDR	Specific forestry aids	24 MEURO
Article 33 of RDR	Protection of the environment ¹	53 MEURO
Sources outside FEOGA/EAGGF and the RDR		
LIFE	LIFE II 2000-2004	Around 12 MEURO per year
Pastoral zones	FEOGA	16 MEURO (of which 5 MEURO from FEOGA)

1 In addition to CTE payments for environmental management

Source: adapted from the Plan du Développement Rural National, draft, 1999

A strong lobby of hunting, agricultural and forestry interests effectively blocked the designation of the first round of SPZs and prompted wide-scale and organised opposition to this EU-led policy, particularly in the south west of France. Coupled with a vigorous scientific debate over the methodology of site designation and species identification, the implementation of the Habitats Directive has been delayed in France. A second issue has been the recent introduction of the *Taxe Générale sur les Activités Polluantes* (TGAP) which is likely to have a serious impact upon some agricultural activities, notably those already facing income loss through modulation, while a third concerns the application of Cross Compliance to agricultural activities in receipt of direct payments. For the environmental NGO '*France Nature Environment*', the CTEs themselves need to go much further than their predecessors, the agri-environmental measures, towards a 'principle of ecological excellence'.

Less Favoured Areas

France has 4 categories of Less Favoured Area; high mountain (23 310 km²), mountain (102,398 km²), foothills 25,154 km²) and other less favoured areas 137,892 km²). The French LFAs occupy some 52.7% of the national metropolitan territory and concern 46.3% of the national UAA. In 1998, some 118,000 farmers received LFA payments, totalling 2.5 billion Francs (with 616 million coming from the EU). These payments concerned over 4 million livestock units and 37,000 ha of land under cultivation. Under the current changes to European agricultural support, LFA payments are shifting from headage to area based payments. In general, across France, this transition has been made in order to maintain approximate existing levels of support and to minimise the numbers of farmers excluded from the new eligibility criteria. The establishment of cross-compliance measures under the EU Horizontal Regulation (maximum and minimum stocking densities) has not, in general, proved a major problem as the vast majority of farmers fall well within the eligibility limits.

The environmental components of French LFA are found both in its overriding philosophy and its mechanisms. Originally introduced in the 1970s, LFA policy has had a significant impact in the mountainous regions of France, threatened above all by agricultural withdrawal. Although some areas have seen livestock intensification, and the concomitant reduction of pasture-based feed systems, as a result of the introduction of headage payments, most upland areas of France have faced and are still facing, rural population and economic decline, agricultural withdrawal, a reduction in grassland biodiversity and an increasingly ageing (and, in many cases celibate) rural and agricultural population. The 50 livestock units ceiling placed upon LFA payments has not been a major constraint to the take-up of the policy.

Water

Water pollution by agricultural activities continues to be a major issue in many regions of France, despite a growing awareness of the problems and the potential solutions over the last 20 years. Pollution by nitrates, pesticides and phosphates is significant in both arable and livestock regions though the geography of the pollution is highly variable. The intensive livestock areas of Brittany and western Normandy (where water resources are often held in surface water) and the intensive arable areas of the Beauce and Champagne Ardennes (where the major ground water resources are found) are amongst the most affected by diffuse but persistent agricultural pollution. Over 10% of drinking water sources are in excess of the European nitrate standard and this figure is rising in certain départements. Agriculture is held to be responsible for at least 55% of nitrate pollution in France.

Since the early 1980s and the creation of the interministerial body CORPEN, a number of actions have been initiated to reduce farm-based water pollution in rural France. These have, on the whole, been voluntary and financial schemes (such as the '*Réduction des intrants*' scheme under the agri-environmental measures introduced following EU Regulation 2078/92 or the voluntary *Ferti-Mieux* scheme, set up in 1991 by the agricultural profession and currently involving around 1.5 million hectares) and, while they have had positive effects locally, have not always halted the generally upward trend. The introduction of the EU Nitrate Directive (676/91) in 1991 prompted a further scheme, the PMPOA (*Programme de maitrise des pollutions d'origine agricole*) aimed at establishing contracts between farmers and the state. For a planned reduction in farm-pollution (including slurry spreading plans and the improvement of animal waste storage facilities) farmers would receive financial help (up to two thirds of the total cost) for pollution-reducing investment. Under the Nitrate Directive, areas susceptible to nitrate pollution from agriculture are designated as either '*zones vulnérables*' (where Codes of Good Practice are imposed upon animal waste management) or '*zones d'excédents structurels*' (when animal wastes exceed 170 kg nitrogen per hectare per canton and where farmers have to submit slurry spreading plans). The '*zones vulnérables*' cover around 36% of French territory while the '*zones d'excédents structurels*' concern the four Breton départements. A recent assessment of the PMPOA scheme (Ministère de l'Agriculture et al., 1999), while acknowledging its importance in raising farmer awareness, identifies the administrative complexities associated with its implementation and the, as yet, limited effects the programme has had in reducing overall levels of farm-based water pollution. It is hoped that the CTE, and the more holistic approach to sustainable agricultural development that they represent, in addition to more collective territorial management initiatives such as the '*Pays*', will remedy some of the operational difficulties associated with the existing sectoral mechanisms.

Global Warming

This is not considered to be a major issue in current French rural development policy. The extensive forest areas of France are considered to be an appropriately large sink to cope with the CO₂ and Methane emissions associated with agriculture.

5.4 Demographic sustainability

Finally, in this review of sustainability issues relating to current rural development practice, we need to identify a continuing area of concern that has recently given rise to a series of local initiatives and actions both within and outside the LEADER II programme. Persistent rural depopulation in certain areas of rural France, particularly the fringe upland départements of the Massif Central, have prompted local actors, often within the framework of LEADER II to set up what are in effect resettlement programmes, attracting people from urban areas and encouraging them to live and work in relatively isolated rural areas thereby contributing to what some have identified as a new rural urbanity (de Félice and Le Calvez, 1996).

Linked to what is generally perceived to be a growing 'urban crisis' in France, LEADER schemes, such as those in the Limousin region in particular, offer advisory services and financial counselling to ex-urban dwellers, in addition to aided housing provision and a series of forms of social assistance (crèches, women's' centres and so on). Working with local agricultural services, they additionally aid newcomers to set up as farmers through land acquisition policies and technical aid and seek to encourage the integration of newcomers into existing social and cultural networks. Drawing frequently upon an essentially disenfranchised and marginalised urban population, often living in poor housing and upon social assistance for whom the city offers few, if any, opportunities for improved well being,

rural resettlement programmes have become associated with development opportunities and reinsertion within a local social fabric (Chaigneau, 1996; Auclair et al., 1998). A network of actors has grown up around this issue combining development officers, academics and local community representatives¹³.

¹³ The magazine 'Village' and the Collective 'Ville Campagne' being two focal points for this movement.

6. Conclusion

It is tempting to suggest that rural development policy has, to some extent, come full circle with farming placed, once again, at the centre of the rural debate. At one level, we note a return, in the discourse of key actors, to the traditional and embedded cultural belief that farming, 'as one's grandfather (sic) used to do', was intrinsically environmentally sustainable and occupied a vital place within rural society and the rural economy¹⁴. Linked to this, is a resurgence of the traditional notion of territory as a cultural, socio-economic and environmental construct.

At another level, however, much has changed irrevocably and the shifts in rural development policy need to be seen more in terms of anticipating future policy agendas and societal relations than in terms of a harking back to former models. The urbanisation of French society and the new social demands that this has engendered not only with respect to nature and the environment but also concerning equality of opportunities and participatory democracy, the shifting framework of governance and local partnership and the challenges to the single unitary and regalian state, the changing socio-economic composition of an increasingly differentiated countryside and, last but by no means least, the changes in agricultural support are all driving current rural development policy and the place of farming within that policy. Significantly, France has opted to focus its National Rural Development Plan upon farming. Other rural development concerns such as non-agricultural economic investment, service provision and repopulation fall into rather different institutional and policy structures, notably those associated with the policies of *aménagement du territoire* and *développement local*. This has been a very clear choice, one driven by an internal political agenda and a recognition of the particularly agrarian nature of rural France.

The French response to the problematic of reconciling agricultural development with rural development and environmental sustainability has been characteristically innovative. Throughout the last 30 years, France has repeatedly sought new methods and approaches for addressing its own diverse rural agendas. The *Parcs Naturels Régionaux* introduced in the late 1960s and the 1970s, the *Contrats de Pays* of the 1980s, the PDD of the 1990s and, most recently, the CTE have all been innovative mechanisms embodying radically new approaches; contractualisation, local partnerships, bottom-up initiatives, State co-funding, inter-communality and so on. In many ways, these domestic policies have inspired EU policy; LEADER in particular draws heavily upon the *Contrat de Pays* approach. Yet, despite this history, such measures continue to sit uneasily upon the shoulders of a persistently hierarchical, sectoral and essentially regalian state edifice which, as we have shown elsewhere, continues to have institutional and administrative, as well as political, difficulties in integrating cross-cutting and cross-sectoral concerns such as sustainability and, we might argue, the genuine multifunctionality of agriculture (Buller, 1998). Significantly, the most important changes are taking place at the local level. Combining the various territorial management policies, programmes and schemes currently available (PNRs, Pays, CTEs, Contrats ruraux and so on), local communities are emerging as highly effective drivers of local sustainable rural development policies, bringing farmers and other rural actors together with town-dwellers into new territorial and policy configurations. The role of the central state, as we have said above, becomes that of partner and financier, rather than policy originator. This is arguably a major step towards the genuine sustainability of rural France.

Within this increasingly localist dynamic, the PDRN emerges as a facilitating mechanism rather than a directly applicable policy instrument. Its strength lies in its holism and in its breadth. It is the first document produced by the Ministry of Agriculture that addresses such a wide range of rural development issues and in doing so, brings different elements within the Ministry and its agencies together. Its weakness is that it only really engages the Ministry of

¹⁴ "Le développement durable ? C'est ce que faisait mon grand père" being a common interpretation.

Agriculture. The Ministry of Regional Planning and the Environment remains conspicuously distant, having its own set of policies and mechanisms for rural and territorial development such as the '*Pays*', *Aménagement du Territoire* and the *Schémas*. A second potential weakness is its too heavy reliance upon the CTE as the principal delivery mechanisms. The implementation of the CTE has been far slower and more difficult than was originally imagined, partly as a result of the institutional and administrative requirements associated with the measure. In part too, the agricultural profession has manifestly failed, as yet, to appropriate the measure, seeing it often as an unnecessary, and in some cases expensive (both in time and money), addition to their already fragile enterprises.

As this report has striven to demonstrate, the debate over rural development links in to other wider debates within France. Some of the prerequisites for effective rural development, as identified by authors working in different national contexts, still have to be firmly acquired by French society still accustomed to a centralised and sectorally organised State. Thus, although there has been an explosion of local and national associations, societies and federations concerned with environmental protection and sustainable development, there remains a relatively unformed culture of political participation. As the demands upon civil society and upon local actors increases through the setting up of partnership schemes and projects, whether they be CDOA, the Pays or LEADER schemes, so this need to strengthen this participatory culture becomes more apparent. The CTE represent an experimental approach to sustainable agricultural development and, it is widely hoped, sustainable rural development. More potentially far-reaching changes, such as to the local taxation system or to local government structures are far less advanced though, for a number of commentators, even more necessary. Finally, as some observers are currently asking, should there be 'rural' development. What legitimacy does this space have over others as the target of specific public policy ?

France has always had an essentially utilitarian attitude to the environment. Born out of the extensiveness of its rural spaces and out of the only recent urbanity, the environment has not generally been interpreted as an abstract construct but rather something that is lived in and worked in; in short something *vécu*. The emergence of a sustainability agenda within rural and agricultural development is, arguably, closer to French concerns than a preservationist or purely protectionist agenda. For this reason, France will undoubtedly play a major role in the development and implementation of future European rural development policy.

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ANNEX I – Institutions Involved in Rural Development in France

1. Government

Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de l'Environnement

20 avenue de Ségur - 75302 Paris 07 SP
telephone (standard) : 01.42.19.20.21
ministere@environnement.gouv.fr
<http://www.environnement.gouv.fr>

Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche

78 rue de Varenne
75349 Paris 07 SP
Tél. : 01 49 55 49 55
<http://www.agriculture.gouv.fr>

Ministère de l'Équipement, des Transports et du Logement

Arche Sud
92055 La Défense cedex 04
Téléphone standard : 01 40 81 21 22
<http://www.equipement.gouv.fr>

2. Agencies and other rural development organisations

Association des Maires de France

41, quai d'Orsay
75343 Paris Cedex 07
Téléphone: 01 44 18 14 14
Télécopie: 01 44 18 14 15

ETD Entreprises Territoires & Développement

5, rue Sextius Michel
75015 Paris
Tél : 01 43 92 67 67
Fax : 01 45 79 89 16
<http://www.etd.asso.fr/>

Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale

1, avenue Charles Floquet
75343 Paris
Cedex 07
<http://www.datar.gouv.fr>

LEADER France

Service d'orientation de l'Unité d'animation
RCT-BDPA France Union Européenne
108 avenue de Fontainebleau
94270 Le Kremlin Bicêtre
Tel : 01 45 15 89 20 / Fax : 01 45 15 89 29
<http://www.resealeader.com/leader/>

**Association de Formation
et d'Information**

Pour le développement d'initiatives rurales
2 rue Paul Escudier 75009 Paris
Tel : 01 48 74 52 88
Fax : 01 42 80 49 27
<http://www.globenet.org/afip>

L'Acteur Rural

La Caillère - 61100 La Carneille
Tél. (33) 02 33 64 01 44 - Fax. (33) 02 33 64 31 91
<http://www.village.tm.fr>

C N A S E A

centre national pour l'aménagement
des structures des exploitations agricoles
7, rue Ernest-Renan
92136 Issy-les-Moulineaux Cedex
tél. : 01 46 48 40 00
fax : 01 46 48 41 54
info@cnasea.fr
<http://www.cnasea.fr>

3. *Agricultural Trade Unions*

CNJA

14, rue la Boétie - 75008 Paris
Tél : 01 42 65 17 51 - Fax : 01 47 42 62 84
<http://www.cnja.com/>

Confédération Paysanne,

81 avenue de la république
93170 BAGNOLET
tel : 01-43-62-04-04 , fax : 01-43-62-80-03
email : confpays@globenet.org
<http://www.confederationpaysanne.fr/>

FNSEA

11 rue de La Baume
75008 PARIS
Tel : 01 53 83 47 47
Fax : 01 53 83 48 48

fnsea@fnsea.fr
<http://www.fnsea.fr>

4. *Environmental organisations*

Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux

La Corderie Royale - BP 263
17305 Rochefort cedex
Tel: 05 46 82 12 34 - Fax: 05 46 82 12 50

France, Nature, Environnement

57, rue Cuvier, 75231-Paris cedex.
Tél. 01 43 36 79 95.
Fax: 01 43 36 84 67