

Sustainable development: five milestones for the next five-year term

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The energy transition, climate change, biodiversity, agriculture... the French President, the government and the new majority after the 2017 elections will need to make some important decisions about sustainable development over the next five-year term. Their agenda will be marked in particular by five key events, not only in France, but also at the European and international levels.

These five events will constitute opportunities to bring the French economy in line with the major challenges of the 21st century, but equally, against a backdrop of increasing unilateralist tendencies and a retreat into national areas, to defend the indispensable cooperation between countries, both within Europe and in the multilateral context worldwide. The global agreements adopted in 2015 on the climate and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were a success for all countries – and particularly France – that support the political project of regulated globalisation combining prosperity, social protection and environmental protection. To address the threat of the collapse of cooperation between countries, France will need to defend these agreements and their implementation over the next five-year term, and give new impetus to an ambitious European project combining these different dimensions. Sustainable development could be the bedrock for closer cooperation between countries and could offer a more engaging narrative for citizens than trade alone.

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Timeline of key dates for sustainable development: 2018-2022

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision of the multiannual energy programme Paris Climate Agreement: facilitative dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European elections United Nations General Assembly High-level Political Forum on the SDGs French presidency of the G7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 15th Conference of the Parties on biodiversity (assessment of the Aichi Targets adopted in 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-term review of the EU Water Framework Directive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4th Earth Summit on sustainable development (Rio+30)

2018: SPECIFYING FRANCE'S ENERGY TRAJECTORY

The previous five-year term was marked by the adoption of France's Energy Transition for Green Growth Act, and by new EU climate targets. This has resulted in an important implementation agenda for the next five years, starting with the revision of the multi-annual energy programme (PPE), the French energy management tool, which should be launched in early 2018. On this occasion, the next government will need to make some important decisions, in particular concerning the scale of the country's nuclear power installations and the share of renewables. Managing energy demand, which must be halved by 2050, will be the cornerstone of this planning process and of decisions made.¹

To achieve this, along with building renovation, the five-year term just beginning will need to implement the successful transformation of the mobility sector, which faces a dual challenge: first, reducing its energy consumption and pollutant emissions; and second, achieving disruptive innovation and changing practices (electrification, autonomous vehicles, shared mobility). As major sources of employment, the automotive and public transport industries need to drive this change, which will also provide new development opportunities for numerous start-ups and SMEs.

The next five-year term needs to set the course for the mobility of the future and to launch a number of different projects: reforming subsidies for electric vehicle purchases to make them more effective and more accessible to low-income households; reforming the taxation of transport to anticipate the slide in revenue from fossil fuels; adopting a strategy to tackle transport poverty, to ensure all people in all territories have access to clean transport options; and supporting the development of shared mobility solutions² and their articulation with conventional public transport systems.

2018: DRIVING THE PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT FORWARD

The commitments made by all countries in Paris in 2015 are a first step towards keeping global warming below 2°C. The Paris Agreement nevertheless points to the need to ratchet up and reinforce these commitments every five years. This is

the context of the inter-state dialogue to be held in 2018, aimed at both reporting on progress made and giving fresh impetus to country commitments.³

The global geopolitical context is nevertheless uncertain today. In particular, the United States could refuse to submit to these international obligations, and China has no intention of reviewing its commitments in the immediate future. The European Union therefore needs to take leadership, and France, the legitimate guardian of the Paris Agreement, is in a position to push for this at the inter-state dialogue in 2018. Through the influence of its diplomatic network as well as the effective implementation of its own climate policies at the national level, France can put climate change at the top of the international agenda, as it did in the run-up to COP21.

The G7 summit, which will be hosted by France in 2019, will be another opportunity for France to work with its partners to boost the momentum and the will required for climate action. France also needs to rapidly launch discussions within the EU on raising European climate ambition⁴ and to push to make this central to the roadmap of the future Commission, which will be appointed in 2019 after the European elections.

Failure to deliver on the promise of Paris would seriously undermine climate governance and the United Nations and would threaten the very notion of international cooperation on climate change. Not only its European partners, but also the developing countries, are expecting France to maintain this dynamic. Its diplomacy must not disappoint.

2019: PREPARING FRANCE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

A few months before the Paris Agreement, France committed with the whole of the international community to achieving the SDGs by 2030. These 17 goals concern not only economic and social issues, but also environmental issues: poverty eradication, educational and gender inequalities, biodiversity conservation and food system sustainability, social protection and workers' rights, development assistance for the poorest countries, etc. The SDGs were a diplomatic success for France, the EU and all countries that promote international cooperation not only in the economic and

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2. Brimont, L. *et al.* (2016). Mobilité collaborative : des promesses aux enjeux pour les pouvoirs publics. IDDRI, *Policy Briefs* N°03/16.

3. Spencer, T. *et al.* (2015). Regular Review and Rounds of Collective Action and National Contributions the 2015 Climate Agreement: A Proposal. IDDRI-NCSC.

4. Spencer, T. *et al.* (2016). Union de l'énergie bas carbone : une évaluation des avancées de l'UE vers ses objectifs climatiques à l'horizon 2030 et 2050. IDDRI, *Study* N°08/16.

security spheres, but also on social and environmental matters. Irrespective of changes in government, the ambition of achieving social and environmental globalisation has always been a key driver of the French political project.

To build on this momentum, France needs to contribute to the success of the high-level political forum on the SDGs, to be held in 2019 during the United Nations General Assembly, which will take stock of progress towards meeting these 17 goals. To do so, France can put its full diplomatic weight behind keeping the SDGs at the top of the international policy agenda, especially during its presidency of the G7.

This means that France needs to lead by example in its SDG implementation. However, the country is not on track to achieving all of these goals,⁵ which are nevertheless central to meeting the expectations of French citizens. Over and above the additional efforts required, in particular to reduce educational inequalities or to preserve its natural heritage, the French government can – as some countries are already doing – give a strong political impetus to make the SDGs its framework for public policy reform and improvement, to identify its priorities for action, to ensure ministries work together and avoid inconsistencies in public policies, and to mobilise companies and local authorities. To do so, it will also need to place the SDGs under the direct responsibility of the Prime Minister.

To ensure the EU is also exemplary on these major global goals, France can rely on other pioneering European countries, such as Sweden and Germany, to make the SDGs central to the 2019 European elections and the roadmap for the next Commission. It will thereby contribute to building a Europe with a stronger focus on social and environmental progress, and thus to renewing a much disputed European project.

2020 AND 2021: HALTING BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Biodiversity and ecosystems received little attention in the electoral debates, but will nevertheless be a key issue for the next five-year term. First, on the international stage, with the biennial COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2020, which will take stock of commitments made in Aichi in 2010 to halt biodiversity loss. Next, at the European level, with the 2021 interim report of the EU Water Framework Directive, which will generate much discussion about the cost of

the poor ecological condition of aquatic environments for the French economy, for drinking water production for cities and industries. And finally, at the national level, with growing public awareness about the risks linked to biodiversity loss.

To anticipate this, the French government needs to continue the efforts underway. The water agencies, created more than 50 years ago for piped water, have long known that they need to redirect their activities towards territories, natural areas and biodiversity. For actors in the field of terrestrial biodiversity, this implies interpreting the biodiversity act as something other than a means of using water agency budgets to finance terrestrial actions. Instead, the challenge will be to form real strategic alliances for action between the water sector and the biodiversity and nature protection sector, at the regional and local levels. This will also entail protecting the existing legal arsenal, such as the biodiversity restoration act or the network of protected land and marine areas.⁶ Today, France has a toolbox it can use to protect its heritage, which some interest groups will attempt to call into question. The next five-year term will need to protect these tools and to ensure the different actors can make use of them: support for associations that sustain legal instruments and protect biodiversity in the field is declining and, in the field, the government lacks the human and financial resources needed to implement these tools.

Stepping up its efforts to protect natural areas, especially in the overseas territories, will give France greater credibility and influence in the next international biodiversity negotiations. It will also enable it to open a new chapter in international coordination, which will be decisive in halting biodiversity loss: that of cooperation between countries that consume and countries that produce commodities that, like palm oil, have a serious environmental impact that transcends borders.

2020: USING CAP REFORM TO DRIVE THE AGRICULTURAL TRANSITION

The new five-year term will be marked by the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2020, a major milestone at the European level and an opportunity to discuss all agricultural and food policies in each of the countries of the Union, and in particular in France.⁷ The goal of this reform is often presented as being protection for

5. Hege, E. *et al.* (2017). La France passera-t-elle le test des Objectifs de développement durable ? Une évaluation des nouveautés et des défis des ODD pour la France. IDDRI, *Study* N°02/17.

6. Laurans, Y. *et al.* (2016). La nouvelle loi pour la biodiversité en France : une boîte à outils. IDDRI, *Issue Briefs* N°12/16.

7. Poux, X. *et al.* (2016). Porter l'agroécologie dans le débat européen par un exercice de scénario : un cadre politique et méthodologique. IDDRI, *Issue Brief* N°13/16.

farmers—who are experiencing economic crises in all sectors, to varying degrees—from the financial risks and shocks of agricultural markets, thanks to new insurance systems.

But protecting farmers also means anticipating the future and supporting them in a transition driven by growing consumer demand for agro-ecological or organic farming that uses fewer pesticides, protects the health of consumers and farmers, does not harm soil, water or air quality, and monitors its greenhouse gas emissions. This transition is also necessitated by the need to adapt to climate change.⁸

Faced with the temptation of a minimalist reform of the CAP, largely centred, as in the French proposal of 2016, around the addition of an insurance pillar with a view to short-term crisis management, it will be in France’s interest to propose a CAP articulated around long-term economic and ecological viability, anticipating the agricultural systems, food, rural territories and landscapes of the future. A CAP that protects farmers and their income and improves their working conditions, in which subsidies are designed and implemented to support farmers in meeting the costs of the changes required by the transition. Implementing the agricultural policy in France therefore calls for a detailed review of the previous government’s agro-ecological project, associating with it the main components of the food and agriculture sector. This will particularly imply continuing to monitor, assess and support the transition initiatives underway at different levels, and collectively validating, over and above subsidies for investments required for certain types of conversion, the other measures

needed (on taxation or accounting, on innovation, to support collective or sectoral organisation, etc.) that will be central to a transition policy for France and the EU.

ANTICIPATING THE POLICY AGENDA... AND CREATING IT

Although the next five-year term will be marked by a number of milestones for sustainable development, other challenges with no pre-established agenda still need to be addressed. One of these is fostering convergence between the digital and ecological transitions. The presidential debate underlined the fact that France needs to deal with these two major transitions.⁹ They must not be steered separately. Smart energy and water systems or autonomous and shared vehicles, for example, provide new opportunities for the ecological transition, and environmental protection is a promising market for digital innovators, in France and for export. The task of the next government will be to align these transitions, and the *French Tech* initiative, France’s economic flagship in the field of digital innovation, has great potential that must be supported. Backing experiments at the interface between digital technologies and ecology, steering investment towards “green French Tech”, and integrating digital innovations into public energy, water and mobility policies: the challenge is huge and exciting, and the future environment and digital technology ministers will have much to gain from working closely together. ■

8. Schwoob, M.-H. *et al.* (2016). Agricultural Transformation Pathways Initiative - 2016 Report. IDDRI - Rothamsted – SDSN.

9. Demailly, D. *et al.* (2016). L'économie collaborative, réservoir d'innovations pour le développement durable. IDDRI - Université Paris Sud - ESCP Europe - Université Paris-Dauphine - Ouishare - CNIID – Zero Waste France.