



## The Pelletier Column

GLAD TO BE HERE AGAIN!

by Christophe Pelletier



Time flies by. It has been a bit more than a year since I took a break from my monthly column. It is with pleasure that I resume writing in *Milling and Grain*, all the more so as I understand that some of you were enquiring about me, which is quite humbling.

There could not be any reason to turn down such a friendly request.

Yet, my approach is slightly different than before. I would like this to be more than just a monthly column. I would like to interact with you. Let's get in contact and get acquainted.

We have a little value chain between you, the readers the magazine and myself. It is an opportunity to go beyond my column. The feedback I received is that many of you find this column valuable and so does the magazine.

Tell me about your work, your hopes and desires, your ideas, as well as perhaps your fears or doubts. I like to make myself easily available. It can happen through my website, email or, my favourite, Skype. With 800 words a month, you can guess that I only scratch the surface. By connecting, there is plenty more available if you wish. This is where value is.

This year of reflection has brought me to revisit my original concept that I had started nine years ago on my blog, *The Food Futurist*. The future of food and farming is quite a broad topic that deals with many dimensions and layers. Most of the focus seems to be on technology and innovation. In my opinion, it is too restrictive.

This is why I will try not to follow the herd, as usual. Understand me well, technology and innovation are essential for the future and I follow them closely, but the future will be successful and prosperous only if we develop scenarios and strategies that take into account the bigger picture.

By this, I mean that the future of food and agriculture is not just about food and agriculture. It is not just about products, techniques and technologies that are being used or will be used in these two sectors only.

To develop a solid vision of the future of food and agriculture, we must first get a solid vision of the world ahead, of how future human societies will be organised, and what their values will be. In the narrative about the future, one hardly ever hears about values, and yet be assured that they will play a critical role, simply because values strongly influence our perception of the world around us and what we care about or not.

The future of food and agriculture will depend very much on how humanity will deal –starting now– with environmental issues, with energy, water, urbanism, transportation, work, education and knowledge, demographics, politics, religion,

culture and economy, to name a few.

The future is about change. A good place to start is to candidly list what must change. Indeed, we must be realistic and admit that humans have a number of bad habits –many of them quite convenient on the short-term, though– that are not sustainable and cannot go on. What must change will have to be replaced, and not just through band-aid solutions. The future is going to be about fixing the causes, not just the symptoms, as we unfortunately have a tendency to prefer to do.

Humanity's attitude towards short-term and long-term goals will also shape our world and societies in such a way that will decide of how and where food will be produced. A key element of how this will happen is money. Where will the money go? What will be subsidised and/or rewarded and what will be discouraged and penalised? What will be the sectors that will attract investors and which ones will lose their appeal?

In order to shape a successful future, all of these questions, and many more, need to be answered. Part of this process is analytical and rational, and another part is emotional and philosophical. Unless we want to reduce humans to zombies without thoughts and emotions, the latter is necessary, just as the former is essential to progress. Defining the future needs using both or cerebral hemispheres. It also requires collaboration, and not just within your sector of activity. Collaboration must happen across any boundary that you can imagine.

It must be across business sectors, across national borders (beware of building walls!), across the entire value chain, across cultures and across beliefs. In a world where tribalism and polarisation seem to gain ground, effective collaboration is far from being a given. Mutual respect and ability to listen are two qualities needed to succeed because they both alleviate fear of the unknown –which the future is all about– and confidence in overcoming challenges for the better.

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He has a very successful blog where you can follow his thoughts at “*The Food Futurist: Foresight, Innovation, Philosophy, Critical Thinking and Visionary Leadership for a Prosperous Future of Food and Farming*”

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