
# The end of the world as we know it – what are the consequences for agriculture and environment?

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*From left to right: Cristina BRUCE, Tassos HANIOTIS, Sandrine DIXSON-DECLÈVE, Stephen SACKUR, Mariangela HUNGRIA*

What does "the end of the world as we know it" mean for agriculture and the environment – and how do we respond to the challenges? Panellists brought diverse perspectives in the first panel, moderated by Stephen SACKUR.

## Focus on innovation and the long-term

"We've been facing the end of the world as we know it for quite some time now from a climate perspective," said Cristina BRUCE, Senior Vice President, Sustainability and Social Impact, Anglo American. Her sector is already taking the long-term view: in mining, a project typically takes 17 years from discovery to production. Anglo American is developing the world's largest deposit of polyhalite, based in northern England, to produce innovative, low-carbon fertilizer products.

## An over-financialised economic system

Sandrine DIXSON-DECLÈVE, Global Ambassador for The Club of Rome and Executive Chair, Earth4All, said a main point was that "we've been here before". The Club of Rome has brought systemic solutions to the European Commission following the COVID pandemic and again after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. These included proposing that Europe diversify energy supply, invest in renewables, address energy efficiency, reduce dependencies and build resilience.

Europe needs to innovate, she agreed: invest in rural communities, forge a genuine partnership with Africa as a food production partner, and pursue a green-social-climate friendly deal.

## Positive legacy of Europe's actions

Has Europe been "too busy defending the status quo and not thinking radical thoughts about the future?" That was the question Stephen SACKUR put to Tassos HANIOTIS, Special Advisor for Sustainable Productivity, Forum for the Future of Agriculture.

Mr HANIOTIS spoke from the perspective of many years in DG AGRI: he started with the 2003 reform - "a real break with the past where we saw the positive effects for years." It positioned farmers as entrepreneurs: reversing the downward trend in farm income, generating strong growth in the agricultural trade balance, and reducing agricultural emissions - the only major agricultural sector in the world to have achieved this.

But there are continuing issues, (…) three major changes define the new landscape, he concluded: trade no longer operates within a predictable framework; the ambition of the climate agenda has been pushed to unrealistic levels and is now swinging to the other extreme; and public trust in science is eroding.

## A "micro green revolution"

Mariangela HUNGRIA, the World Food Prize 2025 laureate – awarded for her work in biological means of fixing nitrogen in soils - joined by live video link from Brazil. "Are we living through a watershed moment?" Stephen SACKUR asked her.

She drew a parallel with the Green Revolution, arguing that today the world needs a "micro green revolution" – a transformation of agriculture through biologicals. Many microorganisms can partially or fully replace synthetic fertilizers, and the world is not yet taking sufficient advantage of this. Ms HUNGRIA gave the example of Brazil's soybean sector, which now relies entirely on biological nitrogen fixation.

The discussion turned to whether Europe is taking advantage of the opportunities offered by science. Key questions were raised regarding who will provide the necessary investment without the promise of suitable returns, and whether the focus should shift from purely financial metrics to broader long-term value.