Foresight, accurate and trustworthy?

If conducted and approached properly foresight can be considered as accurate and trustworthy. Foresightedness is a combination of developing an understanding of possible futures for an organization and acting upon that understanding in a way which brings benefit to the organization. Foresight is not gazing into a crystal ball, predicting the future, or even trying to guess the future. Foresight is the process of developing a range of views of possible ways in which the future could develop, and understanding these sufficiently well to be able to decide what decisions can be taken today to create the best possible tomorrow.

Foresight process follows three phases. Phase One comprises the collection, collation and summarization of a valuable information. Phase Two comprises the translation and interpretation of this knowledge to produce an understanding of its implications for the future from the specific point of view of a particular organization. Phase Three comprises the assimilation and evaluation of this understanding to produce a commitment to action in particular organization. Information on future themes, trends, ideas, early signs and wild cards is collected from a wide range of sources such as experts, universities, business networks, personal networks, customers, suppliers, the “literature”, government, other foresight reports, research and surveys. A good interpretation, as a key step in foresight process, will yield a list of strategies and action which can be taken today to address the various possible futures which have been revealed. Interpretation is in fact translating from an understanding of possible tomorrows into understanding of action which can be taken today.

The set of European Commission Foresight fiches, in my opinion is just partially accurate and trustworthy. It mainly covers data regarding current status and future trends, not so much or just partially covering the essence of interpretation process which is to answer the questions:

* What does all this mean for my “organization”?
* What are the implications for us?, and most importantly
* What can we do about it today?

In order to fully and clearly explain my opinion, I would like to emphasize that I am coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina which is a country in Europe but not a member of EU. Knowing the overall situation in my country, whose intention is to become a member of EU by 2030 (which is the period covered by this foresight) I chose to write about the chapter “Food and nutrition” from the report, since that is something that is considered as competitive advantage of my country.

The most relevant among the trends presented is the need to think about food, its safety and the way of production because it is one of the basic components of life and I think that the current situation is well explored. On the other hand, I think that the current state of the non-EU countries that are planning to become EU member by 2030 is not well covered. The presented trends are mostly based on research, environmental scanning and surveys. I think that innovative foods is a good choice for the topic, but it's also important to pay attention to basic foods. By increasing new technologies you may lose the importance of basic foods like flour, oil, milk, eggs, etc. On the other hand, I cannot say which trend is less relevant, because I think is it important to have tailor made solutions in agriculture production, to optimize returns on inputs including machinery, labour, chemicals, water and energy, whist potentially reducing environmental impacts and enhancing food safety

Furthermore, I think that impacts of climate change and global warming on agriculture and food production are not adequately treated and are only mentioned once in the report, in the section concerning fisheries.

This report has well-defined explanations and ideas about food but just for the countries that are now EU member. Will this report be trustworthy if they count Bosnia and Herzegovina as EU member?

Overall, while reading this foresight report I constantly had the impression that it offers us general data on current and future statuses and trends, end not so much focusing on actions and the very important question of – what can we do today?

This foresight definitely has perspective since it covers important trends and topics, but all the time I could not help but wonder what would happen if Bosnia and Herzegovina becomes a member of EU by the period covered by this report. Is it a threat or opportunity, which in either way is not well covered here.