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Pree-meeting comments from participants on the WDR 2008 Overview
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CECOEDECON

(Comments from Centre for Community Economics and Developmental Consultants Society - CECOEDECON, India)

Agriculture and Development in Indian context

India has a highly diversified agricultural economy affecting the livelihoods of about 60-70% of India's population. Agricultural growth is central to overall growth, stability and poverty alleviation in the Indian context. Indian Agriculture is dependent even today on rain-fed irrigation, and comprises mostly small and marginal farmers with an impoverished resource-base resulting in low productivity. This leads to low marketed surplus and commercialization. It is estimated that a population of more than 5 million is dependent on each of the 35 crops. Recent instances of farmers suicides in India highlight the vulnerability of farming community. All these features make for the immense importance of agriculture as a means of livelihood, as a source of food security, and as the prime focus for any programme of rural development and poverty alleviation.

The average size of land-holdings (land-deeds/*patta*) is very small. For example, more than 80 percent of the farmers in India have a land holding of 2-acres or less, thereby most of them are actually small, marginal farmers engaged in sustenance agriculture. They don't receive any direct support from the government except the little assistance in the form of purchasing fertilizer, seeds and electricity at a subsidized price.

Some challenges in Indian Agriculture:

The scope of household farm being too small, therefore introduction of new technologies, agriculture modernization and industrialization are limited.

Rural industries develop slowly, so it is very difficult to move a part of agriculture labor to rural industries.

Agriculture product processing industries develop more slowly than the agriculture production does.

Infrastructure for agricultural product trading and circulation is not developed enough.

Mountainous areas, where have potential for large-scale commodity agriculture face a lot of difficulties in term transportation, human resources, and investment capital.

Possible solutions/alternatives for agriculture sector (policies and practices)?

Raising the awareness of farmers, enterprises and local bodies about WTO, AoA and its impacts on agriculture products.

Lobby for government policies on agriculture support: move from "output" support to "input" support to increase competitiveness.

Improving the macro-economic environment - reform administrative system, law enforcement, apply new policies in line with the international practices focusing on alternatives.

Improve the competitiveness of agriculture products (apply science and technologies and breeding program to increase yield and quality of the products).

Specific comments relating to the WDR2008 report on Agriculture for Development

It is significant the World Development Report 2008 is focusing on Agriculture. The report in its present form really does not touch upon issue of agrarian crisis directly. It is nice to have a pro-poor focus, but policies in the WTO regime are at variance to what the report is trying to advocate. The report should devote few pages on ill affects of WTO on agriculture. South Asia and South East Asia right from South Korea and Sri Lanka are facing the onslaught of WTO. We cannot blame domestic policies alone for what agriculture is facing today in a country like India. These domestic policies are influenced by International policy regime suggested by World Bank and IMF.

The studies cited on subsidies in India say only half-truth. Report appears to say that do away with all agriculture sector concessions (subsidies). The condition of Asian agriculture is not because of local policies, but policies followed by OECD. The report appears to say what the EU and USA are saying. If the credit flow has reduced for agriculture it is because Basel norms are being implemented in the banking sector under the garb of efficiency. Banking sector has become urban retail lending focused. We cannot say in one breath that affordable credit should be made available to poor farmers to invest in land, and then say SHGs could be the way out. Does BASIX model give cheap credit to farmers? The answer is NO. Report should look at NSSO 2003 surveys of Indian farmers. Page no 31 point 56 of the Report cites the case of BASIX in crop insurance but fails to look at Indian National Crop Insurance Scheme (Vyas and Singh November 4, 2006). Which crop insurance in the world is running without state supported subsidies. Even Basix scheme is not widely accepted. This shows that focus is on private interventions, which cannot bail out poor farmers. The solution suggested by the report is that they should move over and hand over the land to those who can farm efficiently *i.e.* MNCs (a hidden recommendation).

Diversification under the garb of resource use/ depletion also requires objective research. Take the case of Indian Punjab- why blame the farmers when R&D failed them. Why corrections were not made as the problem set in. It is because now it suits the MNCs. What is that policy that fails to give incentive to farmers but incentives to MNCs to grow crops?. Take the case of wheat import by India. **The bogie of competitiveness is raised. Do not grow wheat but grow Gherkins or onions. Do not grow rice but grow potatoes. Do not grow cotton but grow eggplants.** Because wheat, cotton, sugarcane rice should be grown by USA and EU alone and by their MNCs.

The report should strongly raise the issue of how a poor farmer competes with MNC run agriculture and that too supported by huge subsidies in USA and EU. The report should also raise the issue of dumping of agriculture and animal husbandry commodities by USA and EU. Haiti, Philippines or South Korean Rice farmers are few cases in point. Contract farmer is not a panacea of all ills that agriculture is facing. We cannot use the successful example of single/ mono crop agriculture and replicate it in crop diverse countries like India.

Page 32, point 59 of the report cites the case of BT cotton, but it has become a killer crop in cotton belt of India. Are not the MNCs to be blamed for it? Take the case of investment in agriculture. On the one hand we have stopped funding big hydel projects, canal systems, but want watersheds. Watershed alone cannot fulfil what dammed water can do. Horticulture can save water so all Indian states should get on horticulture. What about the markets? The chapter on

markets does not address the issue properly. Private traders have not benefited farmers in India. The community through drip and sprinkler systems can also use canal water judiciously. Here again state intervention is required. The report does not strongly argue about it. May be MNCs can deliver here too. How can rural-urban gap be bridged with the on-going policy regime? The report does implicitly admit that gap widened because of policies of liberalisation. Report should look at Indian experience in non-farm employment- nothing to write home about. The report should critically evaluate models and then come to some solution. The report does not have an answer to where large (72%) population to be dumped with adverse impact of on-going schemes. 1982 reports suggestion and its results should be evaluated in one chapter and lessons drawn. The report would put governments on wrong track and further ruin the fragile rural economies in a country like India.

Further, the report can also look at linking agriculture and health for poverty reduction.

Agriculture and health interact through people, the natural environment, and food and other outputs: poor agricultural producers and their families are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and disease; agricultural systems interact with the environment, in turn affecting human health; and agriculture produces foods, fibers, and plants with medicinal properties essential for human life, health, and culture. These components—agricultural producers, systems, and outputs—interact with one another and present pivotal “nodes” where greater synergies with good health could be achieved.

Good health and productive agriculture are both essential in the fight against poverty. In a rapidly changing world, agriculture faces many challenges, both old (natural resource constraints, extreme weather conditions, and agricultural pests) and new (globalization, environmental degradation, problems of maintaining production in conflict situations). At the same time, new global health threats emerge, such as HIV/AIDS, SARS, and avian influenza, while old ones persist. Not only do malaria, tuberculosis, diarrheal diseases, respiratory infection, and malnutrition continue to take a heavy toll, but the health sector is faced with increasing problems of chronic disease, drug and insecticide resistance, and a diminishing arsenal of effective interventions. And as the world becomes more integrated, so do the agricultural and health problems the world faces.

The interactions between agriculture and health are two-way: agriculture affects health, and health affects agriculture. The process of agricultural production and the outputs it generates can contribute to both good and poor health, among producers as well as the wider population. Agriculture is fundamental for good health through the production of the world’s food, fiber and materials for shelter, and in some systems, medicinal plants. Yet agriculture is associated with many of the world’s major health problems, including undernutrition, malaria, HIV/AIDS, foodborne diseases, diet-related chronic diseases, and a range of occupational health hazards. Agriculture can contribute to both the spread and alleviation of these health conditions.

In the other direction, the occurrence of these health conditions has tremendous implications for agriculture. In the general population, the prevalence of malnutrition and disease influences market demand for agricultural products. In the agricultural population, workers in poor health are less able to work, a situation that cuts productivity and income, perpetuates a downward spiral

into ill health and poverty, and further jeopardizes food security and economic development for the wider population.

The time is ripe for the agricultural and health sectors to work more closely together to develop innovative solutions to help solve their own problems—and each other’s—and contribute to the over- arching goal of addressing poverty. The two-way linkages between agriculture and health pose an opportunity for the two sectors to work together to transform the vicious cycle of negative health- agriculture feedbacks into a more virtuous cycle of self-reinforcing primary prevention of health and agricultural problems.

Source: INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
Sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty
2020 FOCUS13 FOR FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

RDRS

(Input from Kamaluddin Akbar, Executive Director, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Services – RDRS - Bangladesh)

The following issues may be incorporated in the sector Agriculture for development: A policy agenda (p 17-25) of WDR overview:

Increasing access to public extension services: Farming community in many developing countries do not have adequate access to improved technologies primarily due to poor extension services. In Bangladesh for example, only up to 20% farming population have direct contact with the government extension services while the grass-root staff have a tendency to visit resource rich farmers in easily accessible areas only. The poor and women farmers, who are well organized into groups by NGOs, are still neglected. It is therefore important to develop a strategy to include farmer-to-farmer diffusion of technology (Farmer-led Extension) and also include mainstreaming of government extension activities in their Annual Development Plan (ADP) so that all NGO – organized groups are brought under regular public extension services.

Strengthening private sector including NGOs for improving access to financial services: Proper growth of agriculture requires timely availability of quality inputs in adequate quantities at a reasonable price. Poor farmers do not have adequate access to institutional credit for purchasing inputs in time except from NGO micro-credit programme. Access to NGO credit although easily available (free from collateral unlike public bank), is still insufficient to cover large number of resource poor farmers (eg, about 4 million households in Bangladesh) due to shortage of credit fund. Donors and governments should therefore, consider channelling soft loan to potential NGOs (as donors generally provides to governments of many developing countries) to ensure greater coverage of poor farmers including women.

Promote financing of research by private sectors: Investment in public agricultural research is very high and the technologies generated often do not match the local context primarily due to their absence at the grassroots level. This misfit results in a significant yield gap between performance in research institution and in the farmer's field. The private sector being largely engaged in diffusion of agricultural technologies and inputs (e.g., agro-processing, seeds, agro-chemicals etc.) do not find public research results relevant and useful for their benefit resulting in a slow progress of research and extension. It is therefore, important to bring the private sector including NGOs into the national research system of developing countries and donors / governments should promote financing of agricultural research through private sectors.

Strengthening rural organization through NGOs: In many developing countries like Bangladesh, group based extension approach is found very effective where NGOs have come to the fore. These groups are mainly supported by social awareness and micro-credit with less technical know-how. Donor funded projects do not adequately address the existing groups of NGOs and consequently a vast majority of organized groups are under-productive. It is therefore important to include the organized groups of NGOs by both donors and respective governments.

Promote expansion of non-farm employment: Donors/governments should focus more on enterprise and micro industries of on-farm and off-farm products and ensure channelling longer

term micro credit directly to potential NGOs at reasonably lower rate of interest (say 1-2%) as accountable grant in order to increase sustainable industrial growth.

Involving private sector in agricultural reform: Many donors have wide experience in helping governments to improve and reform its agricultural research and extension systems through different projects with a combination of lending and non-lending activities. Nevertheless, direct involvement of the private sector including NGOs in these projects is meagre. It is therefore, important to consider developing a strategy to include NGOs/private sector while implementing development projects in agriculture.

Promote partnership approach in resource allocation rather than contracting: From the experience of government-led partnership projects, it is advisable to allocate resources directly to implementing partners as per roles and responsibilities agreed between parties to avoid bureaucracy and harassment (slow decision-making, bribing etc.). Lead agency shall only monitor overall activities of the projects. It is important that partnership approach should not invite vested interest of a particular organization in the form of contracting out projects where exploitation is the ultimate effect. Donors and governments should address this issue while formulating GO/NGO partnership projects.

Supporting women and children of the migrated rural laborers: Women and children generally suffer due to the out-migration of their male counterparts, both seasonal and permanent. Men usually migrate to urban areas for work leaving the women and children behind in the rural areas. To address this problem, donors and governments should support the migrant families with asset transfer so as to help them with access to self-employment and income generation.

WLWRSA

(Points for Discussion, from Abby Taka Mgugu, Women Land and Water Rights in Southern Africa - WLWRSA)

Introduction

Sub Saharan Africa is an agro-based economy with more than 50% of its population being rural based and thus depending on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. Most of the subsistence farmers are found in arid areas that have erratic rainfall patterns, poor soils and have limited if any assistance in terms of financial and technological resources. The subsistence farmers in most of the Sub Saharan countries have insecure tenure and this makes it difficult for them to access resources due to lack of collateral.

The majority of the population in the rural area have low levels of education and this creates a barrier for them to benefit from the technological advances that are taking place in the world in regard to agricultural development. The same segment of the population has limited access to markets due to poor infrastructure and the skewed trade relations that prevail at national, regional and international levels.

The policy framework governing agricultural development has tended to focus more on the large scale commercial sectors at the expense of the small scale production in which the majority of the peoples of Sub Saharan Africa are found. This is because of the dual legal system that the contemporary Sub Saharan Africa inherited at independence and this has been perpetuated by the modern day governments and through this process the importance of land resources of land and water has become blurred. Land in the context of the African is a complex phenomenon in that it is an economic, cultural social and ontological resource among other aspects.

Based on the above, the concept of revisiting agriculture and making it a developmental tool, one has to take into account the basis of agriculture which are among other issues take due cognisance of the aspect of security of tenure to land and water resources which are the key factors of production. In this regard, this paper submits that more attention should be paid to the following:

Recognition that agricultural development will not take place unless a harmonised policy framework to govern and protect peoples' rights to land and water resources: as both are pre requisites for agricultural development. In the overview, the issues of land and water are mentioned in passing yet they form the basis for agricultural development. Taking into account that Africa is experiencing huge water shortages with 25 countries expected to suffer water scarcity by 2025, the World Development Report should pay more attention to this. The aspect of irrigation development should not be down underplayed in the report especially in the face of the projected water shortages. The causes of the projected water shortages are many but most importantly are the impacts of global warming which has resulted climate change and the south is more affected by this. Need to consider the causes of global warming in detail and suggestions on how the World can contain the emission of greenhouse gases that are responsible for this phenomenon.

Skewed trade relations that prevail at the global level and these have resulted in the dumping of surplus from the north under the guise of 'providing social assistance through food aid.....' this has had negative impacts on agricultural development in sub Saharan Africa as a dependency syndrome has been created; impact of subsidies to the north.

The issue of micro-finances that is part of this report does not provide space for agricultural development. In essence it is a case of keeping them busy but poor!!! Micro Finance does not meet the needs of the farmers to make agriculture a development phenomenon especially in Africa where irrigation development is the way forward.

Seed production: The impact of the huge seed industry on indigenous seed development and knowledge and this has huge costs of the subsistence farmers of Africa yet they could be encouraged to continue developing their own seed banks.

FARM-Africa

(Comments from Christie Peacock, Chief Executive, FARM-Africa)

Keys to success in developing African agriculture

A New Agriculture ? Yes ! new energy and new ways of doing things is urgently needed. The overview covers a lot of ground and I agree with most of it. However, I believe that there are issues which have not been addressed and others that need greater emphasis.

Issues not addressed

If there is a need for a new agriculture then there is a need for **new agriculturalists** with different more entrepreneurial skills.

Ageing of the farming population need for incentives and support for young farmers to enter farming rather than fall into it because they have failed elsewhere.

Land consolidation not mentioned as part of the land issue and the opportunities presented by this for new enterprises.

Reasons for the falling away of interest in agriculture are not analysed and need to be addressed in order to engage new interest. I believe part of this is to do with the **failure of Ministries of Agriculture to perform**. In Africa Mins of Agriculture are, in many places, clinging on in an unreformed state and Ministers are weak in relation to Mins of Finances and the other big spending Ministries of health and Education. The Maputo Declaration, though welcome, is not enough without radically re-thinking and re-engineering state organisations that support smallholder farmers. Without this multi/bi-lateral donors unlikely to invest because they have nothing to invest in. The current vacuum in rural areas – dysfunctional state services combined with weak or absent private sector services is the main reason for the rise of civil society to fill this gap.

Very little attention given to the crucial **role of livestock** particularly in Africa. 40% of Africa can only and should only be used by livestock.

Reason for much NGO ‘success’ is the small, manageable nature of the initiatives and the comprehensive services supplied to farmers. Therefore **to ‘scale-up’ success** (much in vogue at present) needs replication at the scale of the success.

Issues needing more emphasis

In my experience the key issue is the need **for comprehensive support services** for farmers at the ‘meso-level’ (information, new technologies, finances etc). How to ensure these exist is the biggest challenge and needs radical new thinking from us all. Need different models of service delivery in different situations. FARM-Africa has a lot of experience here.

Agree that **farmers’ organisations** are key in the future and new models need to be developed. A new climate of accountability in many countries in Africa will support this and prevent return to past failures of co-operatives etc. This will also give farmers a greater political voice.

Need for **social welfare in states with ‘failed’ agriculture**, e.g. Ethiopia, Malawi etc, that supports the transformation of smallholder agriculture not undermines it. The new safety net programmes are very interesting experiments in this.

The decentralisation of government in many countries opens up huge opportunities for incorporation of **local level planning** (participatory landuse planning, community action planning etc) which is key to successful community-level initiatives (not just in agriculture). FARM-Africa has a lot of experience here.

While R & D is important investing in **research alone will yield no benefit** without investment in mechanisms for technology transfer and scaling-up of good technology. Most companies invest 10%-15% in research and the rest in marketing the products. We should do the same. Donors seem to like putting some money into agriculture research because there is infrastructure to invest in (NARS and CGIAR etc).

Local level participation in planning for the use of, and then managing local **communal resources** – forests, grazing land, recreational spaces, schools etc- is key to ensure local ownership and a sense of responsibility and thus response use of resources. But this must be supported by the state (Min of Ag, police, judiciary etc) and not undermined.

Improvements in **local infrastructure** – roads, electricity, telecoms – can transform local options and opportunities, I guess if I had a choice of investing \$100m in infrastructure or \$100m in ag research then I would go for rural infrastructure every time.

AFRA

(Comments from Lisa Del Grande, Association For Rural Advancement –AFRA- South Africa)

These comments are based on AFRA's own field experiences and additional inputs by Rauri Alcock from the Church Agricultural Programme – CAP, Donna Hornby (Rural Development and Land Tenure specialist) and Makhosi Mveli (Legal Entity Assessment Project - LEAP)

The assertion by the team drafting of the paper that agriculture remains a key instrument for development and that it should be supported and focused on by governments who are trying to address growing levels of poverty and flailing economies is of course welcomed. Based on the primarily rural nature of many struggling economies agriculture continues to feature strongly in rural peoples livelihood strategies.

In responding to the paper the comments concentrate on 5 key areas of disquiet which we think need further debate and exploration:

- 1.** The first is the basic assumptions that the paper works from in relation to linking historical factors of influence to current levels of poverty in rural areas and apparent lack of development in the agricultural sector. From our experience we believe that factors that create rural poverty and maintain or exacerbate this are context specific (own history, social systems, access to tenure rights and even climatic conditions that prevail). What is the team suggesting the key factors are (even in relation to the three emerging economies that are described). It is difficult to trace what this paper is saying about these factors and their specific contexts and histories and how the identification of these are addressed in the proposed way forward. An example of this is that there is no clear description of how the team is describing poverty and its creation in the overview. Without problematising poverty it is not easy to agree on what it is that needs to be developed. While the team acknowledges the growing role of civil society, the international social movements are arguing against the economic model of growing the market (GDP or productivity/ output levels) and are arguing for starting with people and their levels of food security (Right to food campaigns). This debate or the teams agreement on which model it is working from is not consistently clear. There are examples in rural areas of South Africa where local markets are working, essentially beneath the radar of the larger formally recognized market system. People in this local market appear to be able to use land productively and enter the formal market on their own terms eg. Msinga farmers early production of green mealies, and the tomatoe warehouse (failed LED project).
- 2.** This leads to further questions about how the team is problematising the concept of food security and its relative importance in rural development and agricultural economies. How to measure the success of agriculture in developing an economy without defining what food security is and how it might be attained and its importance in addressing poverty or growing an economy was difficult to follow, even though poverty and hunger are acknowledged as a global growing concern. Again examples can be shown where local food security strategies exist and that commercializing agricultural systems in these areas would make those strategies vulnerable and possibly lead to increased levels of insecurity. This links to the points raised in the paper about the role of secure tenure where the team suggests that natural allocation of land towards best users might be a positive outcome.

3. It would also be more useful if agriculture was more specifically defined and discussed in the paper. There is an ongoing struggle with concepts of commercial, subsistence, communal, family farming etc. Each of these may operate with specific systems with specific positive and negative outcomes which might be usefully explored. While subsistence levels of living is not what we would want to maintain in households, this concept is often poorly understood and therefore poorly addressed. In South Africa it is used interchangeably with communal agricultural practices and its negative connotations make it and communal practices opaque systems. As a result poor ill informed policies have meant that these areas remain impenetrable and unsupported. A report released early in 2005, by the OECD assessing agriculture in SA, confirmed that no reliable statistics exist of the numbers of subsistence and communal farmers, yet anything between 4 – 12 million people rely on these systems as a food source. At the same time our history and the various factors that influenced social, political and economic practices have also decimated family farming even in the communal areas eg. Whereas this type of farming relied on children performing certain tasks in cropping and tending to cattle- compulsory education has affected this without new solutions emerging. What little cash people are acquiring through multiple livelihood strategies are being used less and less to reap existing fields because the risks have grown that crops might fail. People would now rather buy than reap. Not clear if this is the sustainable route out of poverty given growing city slums and declining economies.
4. Does one look at trying to shift people towards the existing global formal market without looking at inherent problems with this market and its contribution to growing poverty? Examples in SA is the phenomena of farm dwellers and their future access to agricultural land in such an economy and communal land users – accessing finances means privatizing!?! Again the link between growing the agricultural sector as a contribution to GDP (as a productive output) in the economy and how this increases food security or develops peoples lives (poverty levels defined) was not easy to follow. Example is pg 4 paragraphs 8,9 and 12- the links between agriculture as an economic sector and agriculture as a source of livelihood and livelihoods vs food security. Our assumptions are that livelihood strategies include securing food sources and that livelihoods are economic activities.
5. The few sections on land tenure seems to suggest that privatization of property is the options for future food security. Clearly there is a debate about whether privatizing land into individual land holdings is a necessity for agricultural development or for food security that needs some exploration in this paper. It remains complex and will definitely be context specific given many of the developing countries histories of colonization and disrupted tenure systems and social/ cultural systems. The South African situation is rife with examples and such debates between civil society and government, as I am sure many countries in Africa will be able to contribute to.

CWLR

(Concerns and issues to be raised in the review Meeting, by Seemantinee Khot, Consult for Women and Land Rights - CWLR, India)

The report is comprehensive and critically points out key concerns of agriculture sector. The classification of countries and suitable strategies are very well captured and well led out.

However, the analysis as well as strategic planning appears gender blind. World has not only turned its back on agriculture too early, it has been completely unjust towards women whose contribution to all the five functions of agriculture (growth, well being, business, resources and food security) is significantly higher and qualitative (sustainable, efficient and holistic) but are neglected as labors, decision makers and consumers. This has led to down fall of the quality of production and all the inadequacies in agriculture sector pointed out in the report. This is true for all the three types of countries. Policies to enhance women's access and control over natural resources needs to be given priority for development of agriculture and improving contribution of agriculture in development.

Patriarchy prevailing in all societies, combined with commercialization of resources has resulted tightening men's control over land and all other natural (water..) and economic (budgets..) resources. This is further alienating women from mainstream. In order to correct this bias at least states should give control over common property resources to women.

Encouraging, supporting and applying findings of pro-women research in agriculture / NRM. There is need to identify issues such as impact of pesticides on women's reproductive health, improvisation required in hand tools of and equipments to suit women's physique, women's knowledge and practices for supporting biodiversity.. and so on

Another concern is polarization of benefits and creation of gap between 'haves' and 'have not's'.

Pro-poor land use planning, especially of cultivable lands in the custody of govt is a neglected area. At least in the first category of countries large sections of lands are controlled by the State, denying livelihoods rights to citizens, especially those who can not afford to – the poor. There is an urgent need to increase public investments on common property resources and policies to boost collective farming / resource use. This will also reduce burden of poverty reduction on the States.

More emphasis is required in the strategic planning on sustainable use of all natural resources with a gendered perspective.

Fair price mechanisms, ensuring share in the price of end of the value chain product to farmers (like sugarcane prices in India have a semblance with price of sugar).

Boosting agrifood processing at the lower levels – to generate employment in the second generation farmers and reducing cost of production respecting food sovereignty of local communities and their indigenous knowledge and practices

Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity as a mechanism to boost human health Reviewing agriculture and related policies from human rights perspective

IED-Afrique

(Some issues for discussions, from Bara GUEYE, International Institute for Environment and Development - IED-Afrique - Senegal)

Need to avoid a sharp dichotomy between those who practice the “new agriculture and those who “practice the “old agriculture”. The reality is that in many cases these 2 systems coexist and are complementary. Most successful export oriented, cash crop producers still practice food crop production.

Little said about pastoral systems which play a key economic and social role particularly in drylands Africa. Moreover it remains one the sub-sector with a strong comparative advantage, particularly in West Africa since the currency devaluation in 1994. However, this potential is still being ripped off by the dumping of cheap meat and other dairy products in African markets. Strong policies options needed at national, regional and international levels.

Also very little said about regional economic integration and the need to develop strong regional markets (issue of market sequencing, regional infrastructures, etc.)

Given the multifunctional character of small scale farming, need to address the agriculture policies bias and design rural services that fit the rural households’ diversity of needs. Current public support to rural areas, beside being very limited has many biases: technical (focus on production-related needs, not taking into account other needs: ie consumption, health and education, etc.), gender (only head of household are targeted), seasonal (main agricultural activity targeted), crop (only major cash crops are given priorities)

Need to critically assess the success and failures of the green revolution and to see to what extent it can inspire African. The contexts are different: GR not really benefit resource poor farmers, living in risk prone regions, benefited a strong state support (research, extension, credit) backed by large domestic markets, also very crops did perform well.

Need to stress the importance of farmer innovations to improve agricultural productivity, particularly in a context where public support to agriculture is weak and where the private sector (private banks) is reluctant to genuinely engage in providing credit to poor farmers. These local innovations have proven to be particularly important, particularly in the Sahel region. Need to provide resource to support the scaling up of these innovations.

Focusing on the most entrepreneurial small holders at the expense of the vast majority who usually are resource poor might be counterproductive both on equity and efficiency grounds. Rather take a differentiated approach based on the different livelihoods strategies developed by different categories of farmers.

Best users of lands: need to have criteria to define the best users: those who can invest? Who have large shares of lands? Who can successfully engage with markets? Sometimes facilitating a secure access to land to the poorest farmers may have a far important economic and social value added both at micro and macro levels than using a “skimming” approach.

ALOP

(Comments from Fernando Eguren, CEPES/ALOP - Asociación Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promoción)

1. ALOP sees the next WDR 2008 as an important step to call the attention of governments, aid cooperation agencies, and intergovernmental institutions on the urgent need to ‘look again’ on agricultural development. It is in this view that these comments are delivered.
2. At ALOP we agree, as stated in the Overview section, on the strategic importance of agriculture as an instrument for development. We also agree that “the world has often turned its back on agriculture...”. But it is not enough to affirm this fact. In order to redress development policies in favor of agriculture it is necessary to explore the economic, social, political and cultural trends and forces that have defined the anti-agricultural bias in the past and that still prevail. Failing to engage in such exploration and analysis will result in policies that are bound to fail, even if they appear reasonable enough to be applied. This analysis should include different levels, national and international. Policies are not generated and implemented responding only to “rational considerations” but respond to specific social considerations as well; multilateral organizations have had, and still have, a strong influence in the inspiration and implementation of national policies that have neglected the agricultural sector.
3. It is important to stress the strong influence that agricultural development has in rural society as a whole (much more than, say, industrial development in urban society). Simply put, agricultural development based on big modern farms determines a different kind of rural society than if it is sustained by small and medium sized farms. Concentration of assets –land and capital- and predominance of wage labor relations, as occurs in the first case, define a different pattern of power and wealth distribution and social fabric than in the second case. Each model has different effects on well-being, resources and food security. In my opinion, the latter alternative is preferable if the definition of “development” pretends to go beyond economic indicators. Maybe it would be useful to define a typology of agricultural development taking into account other criteria. Doing so could help to better balance the desired goals of agricultural development, which are of different nature.
4. It is not clear by what criteria the main characteristics of the ‘new agriculture’ are the three mentioned by the Draft: market-driven, state-assisted, and civil society-influenced. We suppose that with other criteria, also relevant to the possibilities and the orientations of agricultural development today, other substantial characteristics could be added: the growing influence of multinational firms in the global as well as national orientations of agricultural development (R&D, technologies, inputs, direct agricultural production, industrial processing, marketing), which, by the way, can add to the “imperfections of the market”; the asymmetrical relations resulting from the growing number of bi or multilateral ‘free trade’ agreements, which go far beyond trade (and redefine intellectual property rights, access to resources, competence of national and international tribunals, etc.) and can jeopardize the national development strategies.

5. Although agricultural production is the main economic activity of rural economy, for a significant number of the peasantry (Andean *minifundistas*, for example) farming is not really a way out of poverty nor it is migration, due to already overcrowded cities with no decent labor opportunities. In this sense, the report should give more attention to the potentialities of territorial rural development (mentioned in the labor market pathway section), which implies economic diversification and the search of multisectoral synergies (besides agriculture, biodiversity, mining, tourism, culture, history, etc.). The decentralization of the State in a number of countries pose favorable conditions to territorial development.
6. Conflicts of different nature do have negative impacts on peasant livelihoods. In particular, the competition for access to natural resources –mining, oil, forestry, biodiversity, water–systematically puts the peasants at the losers side, since it frequently implies a dispute between the extractive industries and the owners of the land: the peasant communities and indigenous populations. The same happens with the negative externalities generated by the extractive industries (depletion of otherwise removable resources, environmental pollution...) which affect directly the peasant population. These are not exceptional problems. From a territorial rural development perspective a non conflictive relation could be highly positive. In practice, governments are usually biased in favor of extractive industries, adding to the difficulty to attain win-win agreements.
7. Local knowledge (*saberes locales*), accumulated by the peasants through trial and error practices through long periods, should not be ignored as an important input to agricultural development. Reports such as that of the WB could help to give legitimacy to this kind of knowledge within the generally technocratic-oriented development community.

ICCO

(Reaction to first draft, from Stineke Oenema, Interchurch Organisation for Development Co-operation - ICCO)

Clear overview over several roles agriculture can and/or should play in economic development in three types of countries

Choice for sedentary agriculture has been made, fisheries is excluded for the purposes of this report

However what about role of pastoralists in agriculture: In some African countries (Sahel, eastern Africa) contribution of agropastoralists to GNP can be quite substantial. A biased attention for just sedentary agriculture can have and had a negative impact on social structures and a neglect of economic opportunity

The interaction between health issues and productivity of agriculture is made (esp. HIV/AIDS and malaria)

It is interesting to note that, related to the above malnutrition is not mentioned, especially where agriculture is mentioned to improve food security. I refer here also to some important international papers: Halving Hunger it can be done (Hunger task force, 2006). Also the World Bank has published a substantial report on nutrition in 2006.

In the table of contents “focus 6” is mentioned: rising energy prices and the demand for liquid biofuels

I have not seen any reference in the main text about this potentially very important subject related directly to agriculture and indirectly to access to land and land use by several actors (eg. small farmers vs big farmers) and impact on food security

Issue of urbanization is mentioned

No reference is made to potential of urban agriculture (nor is it rejected as an option)

Agriculture and trade: the special role of agriculture for food security in many countries requires a “status aparte” of agriculture and agriculture related issues in trade negotiations

In general: very important that indeed small holders are being identified in this report as being crucial actors in agriculture, both for their livelihoods as for food security. A stronger focus on their position (as well as the position of land less farmers in agriculture) is requested, combined with some social issues such as fair access to productive resources (land and water are important ones, apart from credit, knowledge and agrochemicals or organic fertilizers)> It is not just to make the voice of farmers stronger, but also to make governments listen (have an open ear)

FSPG

(Contributions of Canada's Food Security Policy Group – represented at the meeting by Kioko Munyao, World Vision Canada)

The overview document gives very little focus on food security which appears as a secondary concern. Small-scale agricultural production is the foundation of rural food security and the rural economy in most developing countries. To say (in paragraph 12) that agriculture also contributes to food security when markets do not work or when consumers lack resources is to imply that the millions of rural poor who depend on agriculture primarily for their food security needs are an insignificant part of the population. International and national policies must strengthen and not undermine the capacities of small producers to meet their food security needs as well as produce for local markets.

The basis of the overview paper is on an economic model and granted there are examples where this has worked, but the last two decades have clearly demonstrated the limitations of this model for addressing increasing food insecurity as well as income disparities.

The issue of gender in agriculture seems to have been given very little prominence in the overview document. It is impossible to address agriculture in the context of developing countries without understanding the critical role of women in agriculture and the importance of a gender analysis and a gender-sensitive approach. There is a need to bring to focus the issue of marginalization and gender disparities that the overview documents only mentions but doesn't address.

The role of small scale producers in research and development also needs to be given more focus. The assumption that research and development can only be led by scientific institutions with small scale producers being viewed as only recipients or test grounds for the research is a discredited notion which unfortunately the overview paper seems to imply.

Focus should be on the livelihood and entrepreneurial strategies of small holders and the rural poor and not based on land potential. Development assistance for entrepreneurial activity is most useful when it supports local production and distribution by small-holder farmers and the rural poor, leading to revitalized local economies. Strengthening the rights and participation of rural women is central to the success of these efforts and underscores the need for a thorough attention to gender throughout.

The issue of climate change and its effects on the food security of especially poor small scale producers in the south has not been given any attention in this documents and needs to be highlighted as key to ensuring sustainable food security and agriculture production in the future, including support for adaptive strategies of small scale producers, and research into crops etc that will ease the effects of climate change on small scale producers.

IDRC

(Comments from the International Development Research Centre – IDRC)

1. The lack of attention to the dependency of agricultural sustainability on common pool resources (e.g. for water, genetic resources, knowledge, pollinators) and the threats to world food security posed by ecosystem degradation needs to be corrected. In doing so, the report should echo the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in raising a strong warning. Climate change will interact with these other human-induced changes, and we need to understand better the implications for local, regional, and global food security.
2. The report needs to recognise more explicitly, and open up space for bottom-up processes, which IDRC work shows are effective in building effective institutions. It should recognise the risks inherent in driving policy from simplistic, top-down/centralised models.
3. More creativity is needed on the multilateral front in the areas of:
 - i. Biosafety, moving beyond Cartagena Accord et al; and
 - ii. Intellectual Property Rights, where the range of exciting proposals that go beyond TRIPS is considerable (and where a genuine deadlock, between CBD and TRIPS remains to be analyzed and broken.)
4. The three-country grouping seems somewhat contradictory - the recipe given for Sub-Saharan Africa has led to the problems Asia is facing now in inequality and externalities (such as the wrong kind of urbanization).
5. There is a risk, not yet evident in the text, that technology will be seen as a tempting fix to productivity and nutrition issues. What with all the excitement surrounding the African Green Revolution, a box or short assessment of the longer term issues raised by the original Green Revolution might be in order.
6. Overall, the approach suggested by the report is prescriptive. Complex systems theory, ecological economics, and resilience thinking all point to the need for greater emphasis on an experimental approach (try, learn, refine, try again, using rigorous science and systematic learning processes that can be publicly debated).
7. The implications of rising energy costs on the ability to compete in global export markets of perishable products may need more attention.
8. Avoid culturally normative statements such as point 35 "Markets should continually reallocate land to the "best" users". Different societies have different definitions of "best", depending on time-frame, social, economic and environmental values and goals. Rural societies will increasingly resist being excluded from the political processes of deciding what is "best".
9. The focus on institutions is commendable, but para 59, which is all about public institutions and public investments to create a sound and safe technology regime should connect with

para 83, on global public goods where no mention is made of said regime as a prime example of a global public good. The view of GPGs in para 83 is narrow and negative.

10. The general critique of all WDRs has been whether key actors, including the operations side of the WB itself, read them and understand their lessons. A final Chapter called "Key Lessons For....." might well be in order. This point has been made every year and is seldom heeded!

CRESOL

(Comments from Jaap van Doorn, Cooperativa Central de Crédito Rural com Interação Solidária – CRESOL, Brazil)

Although the participation of the civil society in the elaboration of the WDR2008 is very positive, I would like to comment that for most Brazilian leaders of farmer organizations the condition to communicate in English excludes important voices. The input will be limited to the English speaking world.

My concerns which depart from the Brazilian (Family Agriculture and Micro Credit) context:

1. Brazil has several rural realities. The main two being large scale commodity agriculture and Family Agriculture³. National and international policy needs to be oriented to co-existence of both models. Small holders agriculture, which we call Family Agriculture, needs to be recognized and given the same importance as commodity based often large agricultural enterprises;
2. Farmer organizations most definitely play a very important role in an effective development approach, as they are demand based and can assure outreach. Acceptance of and support for a plural representation of the producers is of fundamental importance. Development and poverty reduction has everything to do with empowerment. Representative farmers organizations, with horizontal structures, decentralized decision making, promote effective participation of rural communities in development processes;
3. Family Agriculture is a multi-functional type of agriculture. It has economic values, but also social, labour, cultural, environmental, and other values. All of them are important when discussing poverty reduction in rural areas⁴;
4. Development of the Family Agriculture and Poverty reduction depends on some structural changes in the Brazilian and other Societies such as access to land and agricultural reform, solidary economic relations,...;
5. As stated in the overview, Family Agriculture in Brazil and probably in many other countries is one of the key elements to succeed in social, economical and environmental development. The development needed in this sector is definitely different from enterprise based agriculture. Thus needs a different treatment related to technology, economical support, access to markets and many other issues;
6. The mixture of both subsistence farming and farming for the market is of fundamental importance for a healthy family agriculture. Family agriculture can not develop on market or subsistence demand alone. Policies should promote this mixture on farm / local / regional level;
7. Credit is a very effective instrument in the development of Family Agriculture, but it needs to be applied focused on local and regional economies where possible preferably diversity oriented;
8. Current agricultural models lack the optimal use of available energy resources: soil, water, air, sun, etc.. Family agriculture has the potential to implement a new model based on diversification and a much higher “exploitation” of natural available energy, which is totally

³http://www.mda.gov.br/arquivos/estatisticas_rurais.pdf

⁴Contribution João Carlos Sampaio Torrens ‘Papeis da agricultura familiar na construção de um desenvolvimento sustentável’, in Boletim de Deser, December 2006

different from the way monocultures use the available energy. Related to available energy, great care has to be taken not to repeat a kind of green revolution expectation in relation to the bio fuels.

CDP

(Comments from Dominique Hounkonnou, Connecting Development Partners - CDP-International, Benin)

I feel that Agricultural Research (for Development) is not adequately covered and appears quite late in the document (a little on funding in paragraphs 43 to 45, more in paragraphs 56 and 57).

It could have appeared right in the first part (*The world turned its back on agriculture too early*): at least as far as Africa is concerned, inadequate policies and strategies, and underinvestment in (national) agricultural research is part of the reason why the agricultural part became quite poor on the development agenda.

Paragraph 9: the statement ‘The Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger will not be met without reducing rural poverty’ sounds a bit ‘too obvious’ ... Something should be added; it could be said that: ‘The Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger will not be met without **a strong emphasis on** reducing rural poverty’...

Paragraph 12: the opposition as it appears here, ‘buying food’ vs. ‘producing food’ raises the question ‘What is the basic function of agriculture?’... Instead of lurching that debate (which I think is not neutral), what seems more useful here is to stress the importance of the right balance between food crops and cash crops in agricultural production systems (to generate the necessary amount of foreign exchange to complement food supply through imports ...).

Paragraphs 14 and 15: the opposition ‘new agriculture’ / ‘old agriculture’ is quite artificial for a good part of Africa... and the drastic change in the respective roles of the state and the farmer organisations have not always been accompanied by the necessary measures to make things work!

Paragraph 20: I definitely support the point made here about the fall in ‘official development assistance’... (which is one of the consequences of the ‘too quick change in roles’ mentioned just above...*making it easier, in some cases, for governments not to bear their responsibilities!*)...

Paragraph 23: (classic) financial services are facing the problem of ‘high transaction costs and risks in rural areas’, but some local initiatives in microfinance are real success stories...

Paragraph 24: I strongly support this section ... provided that enough room is *really* given to farmer and civil society organisations ...beyond the political declarations...

Paragraph 57: not only that the difficulty of R&D institutions in reaching farmers inhibit their ability to attract funds, but it first prevents them from addressing the real issues or having the agenda right! This is a crucial issue which some new initiatives (innovation system – oriented) are trying to address (for example the Dutch-funded *Convergence of Sciences Project*, in Benin and Ghana, and – hopefully – soon, also in Burkina Faso and Mali).

Paragraph 58: the second sentence on ‘empowerment’ should be moved to paragraph 60. The issues of public-private partnerships (1st sentence) and of the information technologies (3rd sentence) should be developed in different paragraphs.

Paragraph 83: I suggest to complete the 3rd sentence as follows: “But international institutions will need reform to better address the growing global agenda through more coherent intersectoral approaches *and effective linkages with local and national stakeholders.*”

Khanya-aicdd

(Comments of Ian Goldman, Khanya African Institute for Community Driven Development – aicdd, South Africa)

Agriculture must be the key driver for rural development in Africa, where the populace is still predominantly rural. However it has been neglected:

- As countries have focused on other commodities (oil, minerals) which involve high capital, large scale, often centralised, and the considerable interest from outsiders, all conspire to promote corruption and conflict (Nigeria, Angola, Sudan)
- in striving to keep urban food prices low at the expense of producers (eg Zambia in the 1980s)
- very poorly designed and executed agricultural and rural development programmes in the 1980s and 1990s
- in adopting ideologically driven liberalisation policies which were naïve about the strength of the private sector and the difficulty of replacing state institutions, however weak some of these were (eg Zambia, Malawi, or Iraq)
- in poorly executed land reform (eg Zimbabwe since 1999, South Africa)
- in very poor agricultural extension systems, which some donors have persisted in supporting, rather than supporting alternative models such as farmer to farmer extension, farmer field schools etc (many countries)
- in the vestiges of colonialism in Southern Africa in particular reducing entrepreneurial skills and creating dependency, with politics of dependency-inducing state patronage which have often been continued by independent governments as the source of their legitimacy
- in a public sector which has often focused on self-preservation rather than effective services for their clients
- and in the difficulty in Africa of having strong enough institutions capable of supporting widespread farmer growth and innovation (eg Lesotho, Zambia)

The combination of these has in many cases resulted in African countries giving up the belief that there is power to foster indigenous agricultural growth while facing globalisation in agriculture, and donor fatigue. This is despite the importance of agriculture for rural economies for food security and as one of the few sectors that can result in broad-based growth from the bottom. The corner does seem to have been turned here, and the impacts of climate change on food production are likely to increase attention on agriculture (eg commodity traders are now betting on increasing prices for commodities such as wheat).

Overall the consensus of donor-driven agricultural development has been on liberalisation, reduction of state involvement in agricultural marketing, differential pricing across countries. There has been a removal of protection for basic food crops which are in many cases the only real opportunity for people in rural areas – and without some protection areas where it was viable to produce are no longer producing (see Box 1). Many of these countries are also facing major challenges of food security, eg in Southern Africa. Some countries are now attempting to restore these types of systems through other mechanisms, eg the Starter Pack Scheme in Malawi which

was having considerable impact in reducing food insecurity, and then has been made more difficult by donors pressuring for this to be seen as social protection and so only available to the most vulnerable (eg see Cromwell's work quoted in Cabral, 2006⁵)

South Korea, Taiwan and China all based their economic growth on land reform, which started a process of capital accumulation amongst peasants which was a major driver of their current success (combined with basic education and health care). One of the best recent contrasts is with Vietnam, whose very high growth rate has a very high component derived from agriculture (in 2001 24% of GDP was from agriculture, forestry and fisheries and 68% of employment⁶).

Box 1 N Zambia in the 1980s

In areas such as Mpika, Serenje and Chinsali, agricultural production was growing at 8-10% per annum in the 1980s, which justified investment in infrastructure¹. This was based on adequate prices, poor but nevertheless adequate delivery of inputs. This collapsed following liberalisation and these areas with reliable rainfall are now no longer significant agricultural producers.

In Zimbabwe despite some real success in the 80s and early 90s these achievements have been derailed since 2000. In South Africa, one country with the resources and institutional capacity to make a significant difference, the government does not believe in the viability of small farmer-led growth, land reform has been inadequate, agricultural extension is very poor, so the package of services needed to make land reform a success is not available.

Africa has been too dependant on outside ideas, outside money, and donor-driven agendas, which has combined with weak indigenous leadership with very limited accountability to the populace. In many countries leadership has not had the strength to develop and sustain an indigenous economic and social development process, building the country, rather than taking from the country, and to sustain a viable alternative to the Western models promoted by donors. One limited example of this is the institution of a state pension in Lesotho, against the wishes of the IMF and World Bank, which looks to be having some promising results. There are some countries that are beacons of hope, eg South Africa, Botswana, Uganda, but of these 3 it is only in the latter that we see some models of small-farmer led growth which have promise for the future.

⁵ Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Rural Productive Sectors: what have we learnt, what else do we need to ask?, ODI, Natural Resource Perspectives 100.

⁶ GDP Statistics, World Bank, www.worldbank.org

MODE

(Concerns and issues from Bharat Shrestha, Mobilization and Development – MODE – Nepal)

1. Agriculture Policy

Subsidy on inputs, credit, transportation etc
Minimum support price of crops
Extension services
Input delivery
Commercialization of agriculture
Import and Export of crops

2. Markets and Marketing

Access to Market Information
Establishment of markets
Marketing channels (involvement of intermediaries)

3. Agriculture and Rural Development

Farmers groups
Saving and credit – micro enterprises/agro enterprises
Road links –agriculture

4. Social Inclusions and good governance

Agriculture and women
Agriculture and Janajati
Agriculture and madeshi

5. Sustainable Agriculture

Studies on land use, soil
Initiation of permaculture
Inclusion of small holders

6. Safeguarding and Encouraging small holders/farmers

Small farmers
Landless
Group farming
Tenureship of land – lease land, community forestry

IFAP

(Comments from Jack Wilkinson, President, International Federation of Agricultural Producers – IFAP)

1. The initiative of the World Bank to consult civil society for this report is very welcome. However, it should be noted that since the last WB Report on Agriculture in 1982, the situation of rural populations has worsened, meaning that existing agricultural strategies are not working. There is an urgent need to adopt a new approach. The classic approach of moving small-scale, subsistence farmers off the land into other sectors is not a viable option for most of the poorest countries given the large size of their agricultural populations and the lack of development of their manufacturing and service sectors. Thus any successful agricultural and rural development strategy requires investment in small-farm agriculture so that subsistence farmers become small-scale entrepreneurs and not migrants to over-crowded cities. At the same time, it is also necessary to create small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to bring value-added to the farmers, e.g. through farmer cooperatives. The development of local SMEs will also enable farmers to be able to supply local markets with locally-sourced products, which is important in a global agri-food system dominated by multinational retail chains which source globally.
2. Farmers are the main actors of the agricultural sector, and therefore IFAP proposes that agricultural and rural development strategies should be based on a “farmer-centered approach”. The definition of agriculture policies and rural development strategies should include the main stakeholders and get them involved in their definition as well as their implementation.
3. IFAP believes that the purpose of agricultural policies and rural development strategies should be to improve farmers’ revenues and make agriculture a profitable activity for farmers round the world. It is important to invest in agriculture and generate income at country level. This is essential if the MDGs to reduce poverty and hunger are to be met.
4. The farmer-centered approach implies that an environment should be created to enable farmers to be able among others to:
 - have access to resources and technical support
 - add more value to their primary products
 - and find alternatives to improve their revenues through market diversification exp: adapted responses to climate change including biofuels that bring benefits to farmers
5. Farm profitability will not occur without organizing and strengthening the place of farmers in the marketplace. To succeed, this requires a partnership between national farmers’ organizations and national governments with the assistance and collaboration of the entire development community to get farmers involved in the definition and implementation at all stages of agricultural and rural development strategies at local, national, regional and international levels.
6. As a consequence, there is an urgent need for international organizations to change their approaches in order to consider farmers as equal partners and get them involved in :

- Policy definition and implementation: for example in defining its country strategy and rural development strategy, the World Bank should set up targets such as meeting the MDGs. Loans to a country should be based on an adequate rural development strategy with the inclusion of farmers' organizations as partners. This inclusion should be supported by *sustainable financing mechanisms* to ensure the effectiveness of that participation.
- Research area: Farmers should be engaged in the research area in order to define their needs and priorities, and to better benefit from the research findings and so improve their livelihoods. This is a case for CGIAR and other relevant research institutions.
- It should be noted that the initiative of IFAD in involving farmers in their national projects and at international level through the Farmers Forum is the line of the farmer-approach and should be highly encouraged and adopted by the others.
- In addition, a process of analysis of lessons learned should be set up to ensure that 1) the targets (i.e. MDGs) are met and 2) alternatives are found to adjust when the targets are not met in order to go forward.

Finally, coherence and transparency are the keys for success. Indeed, many farmers' are concerned about lack of coherence within the World Bank itself where various departments adopt different approaches in the same village community. It is therefore urgent to set up a coordination process among all international organizations in their agricultural development strategies and projects in order to speak the same language and pursue more effectively the same target, that is to say reducing poverty.

AgriCord

(Comments and concerns from Ignace Coussement, AgriCord)

This contribution is formulated from the perspective of: “*What kind of support do farmers’ organisations need and deserve to allow them to play a significant role?*” AgriCord’s mission is the strengthening of producer organisations in developing countries. AgriCord has its roots in the farmers’ world in OECD countries, and works with IFAP, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers. IFAP and AgriCord implement “*Farmers Fighting Poverty*”, a comprehensive 4-year program for strengthening producer organisations in developing countries.

1. The Overview proposes policies and investment options. In order to contribute to effective implementation of these policies and investment options, we expect the Report to identify the major actors more clearly, and to pinpoint the responsibilities of each of these actors. The national level being the most important to be considered⁷, the key actors are (a) national Governments, (b) national rural producer organisations, (c) the private sector, and (d) the donor community.
2. RPO’s are eager to take up their responsibilities, and have greatly improved their strategic planning. But there is still a gap between the expectations vis-a-vis RPO’s, as indicated in the Overview, and their capacity to deliver. We expect WDR2008 to address this gap, and to confirm that the global community (Government, donor community) is still under-investing in this part of civil society.
3. One particularly important issue is the partnership between RPO’s and their Governments⁸. It is important that WDR2008 urges Governments to involve RPO’s in policy preparation on agreed issues, and on the national development agenda in particular. Efforts for strengthening RPO’s in specific “participatory policy generation processes” are a lot more effective when such an agenda is shared by all parties.
4. The behaviour of the private sector (input suppliers, traders, processors, retailers, etc.) deserves more attention. Its relations with smallholders and their collective initiatives are generally unequal. WDR2008 can address the private sector in terms of its corporate responsibilities, and can urge governments to promote inclusive dialogue processes. The strengthening of RPO’s for collective action is essential to ensure smallholder involvement in markets.
5. The translation of WDR2008 into coherent national policies, including programmes supported by the World Bank (and not only agricultural programmes), is an important issue, as is the participation of RPO’s in this exercise. WDR2008 can argue for such processes, and mobilize for increased support to enable genuine participation of producers and their organisations. We need to bridge the gap⁹ between the thinkers (policy makers, development framework specialists) and those who have to do the work.

⁷ Contribution D. Pesche ‘OPR et Politiques Publiques’, WDR Paris Workshop, 30-31 October, 2006.

⁸ Editorial D. King “Creating Rural Entrepreneurs” in IFAP World Farmer, November 2006.

⁹ Contribution Frans van Hoof & Freddy Destrait “OPR et Construction de l’Environnement Institutionnel”, WDR Paris Workshop, 30-31 October, 2006.

Oxfam International

(Discussion Points from Oxfam International)

Oxfam International welcomes the focus of the WDR on agriculture, the recognition of the sector's importance and of its historic neglect by donors and governments.

However, there appear to be some significant weaknesses in the draft outline. We would encourage:

1. **More critical analysis of the contribution women make to agriculture, the impact on women of changes in agriculture and the linkages to poverty reduction.** Women's involvement in agriculture, and the implications this has for poverty reduction, is not sufficiently addressed. Substantial value addition in the system is produced by women, but not captured by them. There is little gendered analysis of the impacts of changing employment patterns, the 'descaling' of the state or changing markets for land and finance. Women's role in producer organisations is not mentioned.
2. **Stronger exploration of the importance of smallholder agriculture in overcoming poverty and contributing to economic growth:** While the overview presents smallholder agriculture as key to poverty reduction in certain contexts, there is little examination of the conditions necessary to enable smallholders play this role or the comparative advantage of smallholder agriculture vs a vs large-scale agriculture in terms of equity, environmental sustainability and effective Producer Organisations. There is no consideration of the trend towards even smaller farms, and the implications for smallholder agriculture.
3. **Further analysis of the role of the state:** Although the Overview discusses state agricultural policies to date, there is little analysis of the capacity of state institutions to carry out the public sector interventions necessary, or of successful state intervention experiences. There is no analysis of the role of state marketing boards or price stabilization.
4. **More sophisticated analysis of the role of the private sector:** the Overview treats the private sector as homogenous, and does not examine the different roles played by international or national companies. Although responsibility for corporate regulation is rightly attributed to the state, there is little consideration of the role of corporate self-regulation. We suggest a better examination of the impact of global input companies on markets, land use and food production systems, and the role of big business in shaping today's world food system. The role of consumers in supporting and shaping the global food system is also overlooked.
5. **Harder look at the nature of agricultural labour:** the Overview does not distinguish between formal and informal labour markets, or make clear different labour markets, e.g. on family farms or in export-processing zones, and women's role in these markets. We would want to see a stronger emphasis on the way in which agricultural supply chains are based on the flexibilization of the labour force, and the commensurate impacts on poverty and health.

6. **Wider description of the nature of Producer Organisations and other institutions for enhancing Farmer Market Power:** Although the role of Rural Producer Organisations is acknowledged to a greater extent than in previous drafts, there is still little description of the variety of institutional forms, and their impact.
7. **Analysis of Structural Adjustment Programmes:** we would like to see greater discussion of the impact, and of why they have been employed in some areas and not in others.

IEP

(Comments from Roxana Barrantes, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos – IEP, Peru)

What is so different about agriculture with respect to other economic activities? The report clearly identifies three key variables: 1) it is the main source of food; 2) a majority of the world population's livelihood is based on agriculture related activities; and 3) the vast majority of the poor depend on agriculture. On top of this, it is clear now that agriculture is a major determinant of sustainable development due to, at least, two characteristics: 1) absolute dependence on two natural resources –water and land; 2) the provision of environmental services.

One key point in the report is the importance of increasing agricultural productivity to effectively make agricultural activities a viable path out of poverty. Therefore, by focusing on augmenting agricultural productivity, the report clearly implies the need to look beyond traditional policies focused on input (i.e. fertilizer) and product markets, as productivity is the result of the combination of several inputs, of which labor is of outmost importance. Thus, the emphasis in increasing agricultural productivity implies placing policies aimed at strengthening human and social capital the forefront. Social capital in particular deserves more attention, as communal efforts could better help those strategies aimed at getting markets rights and improving the effectiveness of public investment –if decisions are made at a regionally decentralized level. On the other hand, it is important that this increase in productivity be tied to the identification and opening of new markets for new products and environmental services, for instance.

Another key point is the importance of institutions to support agriculture for development. The report focuses on those specifically designed to support the development of markets, be it for financial services, land, input markets and rural producer organizations. However, political institutions, such as municipalities, in rural areas are important players for making agriculture a viable development option. In several countries, municipalities are responsible of monitoring and promoting rural development, and receive significant amounts of public resources to be spent on investments to promote development. Those resources should be devoted to promote rural and agricultural development and reach the majority of local dwellers. Beginning with their responsibility in managing social programs, such as those distributing food to needy families, and their accountability to locals, municipalities may be key players in providing public goods and coordinating community efforts to attain a better presence in markets, by investing in capital promoting sustainability.

In Latin America in particular, the recommendation of the development of local (domestic), specifically rural, markets, be it of products and input including labor, has a component which is important to highlight. That is the dynamics introduced as a possible geographic chain reaction, in which more isolated people begin their market insertion by interacting with local producers living in intermediately located areas, who in turn interact with agents serving small size localities or cities close by. These markets are also important to engage the agricultural and rural development with a territorial development approach that is needed to help a virtuous relationship with the use and conservation of natural resources.

FARNPAN

(Comments from Haidari K.R. Amani, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network - FARNPAN)

The WDR 2008 on Agriculture has addressed what we consider to be the main issues at the time. We just want to emphasise some of them, particularly in relation to the Agricultural-based countries.

Context

During the 1990s, researchers and policy-makers largely neglected the agricultural sector, while favouring modernization through the development of the manufacturing and service sectors. Declining official investment in agricultural development provides evidence for this trend. Interestingly, this shift away from agriculture went hand in hand with a lower rate of poverty reduction. The main reasons why the sector's potential has been relatively ignored for a decade appear to be a steady decline in commodity prices, in tandem with the increased competition that developing economies face from large agricultural subsidies in the developed world and the related problems of market access.

In developing countries especially, the performance of the agricultural sector often depends on conditions outside policy-makers' reach. The weather, world prices (depending on how much the world demands of agricultural products and how much the rest of the world produces), external trade barriers and market access all play a role in determining agricultural outcomes. As a result, the agricultural sector is arguably more vulnerable and more dependent on a fair globalization than any other sector.

NEEDED POLICY FRAMEWORK AND ISSUES

A cohesive long-term strategy for agriculture-led growth in agricultural-based countries involves at least five central elements, namely sustained Macroeconomic stability, more effective research and extension, improved infrastructure, a tax and regulatory environment that is conducive to investment by both enterprise and individual farmers, and developing a coherent institutional framework for supporting the transformation of agriculture and rural development more broadly. Hence what matters for improved performance of agriculture to a very large extent depends on what happens outside the institutions directly responsible for agriculture.

While within the sector research and extension have been singled out as most potent for both productivity growth and poverty reduction, outside of it better road and education, increased access to finance, lower and more transparent taxation as well as greater contestability of markets are all critical for success. The question is what is an appropriate institutional arrangement and/or instruments for pulling these together in a cohesive strategy. A rural development strategy is a useful starting point.

The lack of clearly defined and coordinated strategies among various GOT institutions for the development of agriculture and rural development more broadly has constrained the development of a coherent strategy for the transformation of agriculture. The situation is made more complex by the absence of a sector-wide framework and cross-sector cohesive strategy as well as coordination mechanisms for the transformation of agriculture in the context of a rural

development strategy. Such mechanisms need to recognise the wide diversity of the needs of the different sub-sectors, agro-climatic zones, and rural communities.

Under-provision of rural road networks and connectivity of the main road arteries limit accessibility of markets and raise costs to the producers, suppliers of inputs and crop procurement. In a study on the relative effectiveness of different categories of Government spending aimed at reducing rural poverty and promoting productivity growth in India (IFPRI, 1999), public spending on roads, was found to be most effective in reducing poverty largely through raising rural incomes and it was second only to research and development in raising productivity growth.

From the evidence presented earlier, what matters for improved performance of agriculture to a very large extent depends on what happens outside the institutions directly responsible for agriculture. While within the sector research and extension have been singled out as most potent for both productivity growth and poverty reduction, outside of it better roads and education, increased access to finance, lower and more transparent taxation as well as greater contestability of markets are all critical for success. The question is what are appropriate institutional arrangement and/or instruments for pulling these together in a cohesive strategy.

Investment in research and extension

Relying entirely on private-sector involvement in agricultural research and extension in Tanzania is not an option because of externalities: both the Government and the private sector are carrying out agricultural research and extension in Tanzania. The private sector's involvement is a recent phenomenon and is largely confined to commercial crops such as tea. Because of externalities and to ensure coverage of smallholder crops, relying entirely on private-sector research is not an option. In the case of export crops and tradable food crops, almost all the benefits of research accrue to farmers because world markets set prices. In the case of non-tradable food crops, productivity-increasing research is likely to lower market prices, with benefits shared between producers and consumers.

Facilitating the adoption of technological innovations for raising both land and labor productivity is key for success. Agricultural research for adapting imported technology and improved seeds to local conditions as well as developing new varieties and technology is one part of this effort. To this end there is need to reverse the decline in agricultural research support and find ways of rationalizing research on a regional scale for similar ecological conditions. National and regional research infrastructure exists but it is very much under-funded. A related aspect in technological diffusion is creating an effective system for conveying new technological information. The vast improvement in media can be harnessed for the purpose and curricula in the education system can be used to infuse knowledge on best practice.

The short-to medium term strategy

There are several measures that the government can implement to stimulate agriculture and boost rural standards of living in the short to medium run. They include: limiting local taxation of agriculture, liberalizing regional food trade, promoting agricultural credit, re-examining the impact of food aid, and increasing budgetary support for agriculture. The effectiveness of these

measures would serve as a public signal of the government's commitment to address the problem of rural poverty and the low returns to agriculture.

Improving affordability, availability, and quality of agricultural inputs

Pursuit of productivity growth in agriculture is critical for raising returns to committed resources and effort and would require several critical interventions.

Constrained access to inputs, credit and timely advice to a large extent holds back progress in the intensification of agriculture. Indeed agricultural research and extension generate high returns on investment, as demonstrated by hundreds of rate-of-return studies. Furthermore based on India's experience, Government spending on R & D ranked as the most effective support for raising productivity growth in agriculture. The problems of R & D in many of the agricultural-based countries mainly relate to poor transfer of knowledge from research to application.

AsiaDHRRA

(Comments from Marlene D. Ramirez, Secretary General, Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia - AsiaDHRRA)

1. This set of comments is drawn from AsiaDHRRA's work with farmers' organizations at the regional and national levels thru partner organizations and from its interaction with various civil society groups working for the protection of rights and interests of the working people in rural Asia. AsiaDHRRA in 1999 catalyzed the formation of and supports the Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), an alliance of Farmers' Organizations in the southeast and east asian region.
2. Agriculture as focus of the World Development Report 2008 is a welcome development and provides opportunity for policy discussions and reform. However, much has been said and written about on what should/could be changed, based on lessons learned not only of those working on the ground but even by policy institutions and academic groups, to make agriculture a more rewarding venture for the vulnerable sectors in the rural areas (small farmers, fishers, rural women, indigenous peoples). The absence of political will by governments and financial institutions to invest on what seemingly is not along the neo-liberal frame, puts us in a never ending cycle of debates, policy making, debates. And poor farmers remain poor.

Context of Poor Farmers and Producers in Asia (and world over)

3. Agricultural trade globalization under the neo-liberal economic paradigm has disempowered and alienated farmers and producers from the rest of the commodity chain as soon as their produce leaves their farms. Farmers have been reduced to end-users of agricultural inputs produced by companies and as producers of raw materials processed and manufactured by companies before these are sold to consumers in the domestic and export markets.
4. With widespread dependence of farmers on chemical agricultural inputs and the increasing adoption of modern seeds, as promoted by governments under the Green Revolution there is massive consolidation and merging of corporations dealing with agricultural chemicals, seeds and processing into a few giant and powerful entities.
5. The integration of the forward and backward linkages in the agricultural commodity chain has helplessly trapped farmers the world over in a cycle of dependence, indebtedness and poverty. While still playing a very crucial role in the commodity chain, particularly limited to production, farmers generally do not have a role in setting the price for their farm produce, including staple crops which are mainly consumed where these are produced such as in the case of rice. Farmers are left at the mercy of the "market". With the constantly increasing prices of agricultural inputs and the steady decreasing prices of their products in the domestic and world markets, farmers are condemned to a life of poverty across Asia.
6. As a consequence, farmers are driven out of their farms by selling their lands or lease out their lands to agricultural corporations involved in large-scale commercial crop production. Without land to till and without viable livelihood opportunities, thousands of farmers leave their farms and join the urban poor population in cities where they continue to be economically, socially and politically marginalized. The situation sets off a bigger cycle of marginalization, disempowerment and poverty in rural and urban areas in many developing countries across Asia.

7. Rural poverty translates to food insecurity. High costs of farm inputs and low prices of agricultural products reduce capacity to buy food. With limited land and the push for monocropping to cater to the demands of the market, farmers have limited land to grow food for their household. Low level of education in many rural households aggravates this ironic situation. Traditional knowledge and practices in backyard cultivation of vegetables and fruits have been severely eroded over the decades.
8. Diverse traditional food base is now under assault from the introduction of uniform commercial hybrid seeds catering to market demands and of cheap imported fruits and vegetables flooding the local markets.
9. The responses of governments at the national and multilateral levels to this poverty cycle often create more problems rather than addressing the root causes. Promotion of monoculture production of high-value commercial crops by governments result to further displacement of farmers from their lands by either pushing them out directly from their farms, or by effectively cutting their ties with the land, or by reducing them into agricultural workers in their own land. Land management schemes such as contract farming have become vehicles for the further economic and political marginalization of farmers, who end up as exploited farm workers, working for long hours in exchange for indecent wages under conditions of grave risks through unprotected exposure to agricultural chemicals.
10. Governments have knocked down barriers to trade by substantially reducing tariffs on imported goods and ending subsidies to farmers. Without capacity and resources to compete with cheaper imported goods from other developing countries and products dumped by rich countries to support their own heavily-subsidized producers, local farmers are buried more deeply in debts and many were driven out of their lands – triggering even more the rural-urban poverty cycle.

Alternatives offered by CSOs

11. Amidst this bleak situation of small farmers are inspiring initiatives to make trade work for them. Some of these are CSO supported alternatives that involved efforts to free farmers from the trap of the debt-poverty cycle, and provide consumers with better quality and fairly traded products. Through various approaches, the roles of traders and middlemen have been eliminated, or at least significantly reduced, by directly linking or facilitating the linkage of farmers with consumers and the market. Beyond offering higher prices and fairer terms to farmers, farmers added value to their products to increase their price and by expanding their off-farm income sources. Studies of these alternatives point to the urgency of addressing the roots of the debt-poverty cycle by cutting the cord of farmers' dependence in different forms involving different actors.
12. Dependence on expensive farm inputs such as agricultural chemicals, fertilizers and commercial seeds; Credit dependence, closely tied to farmers' dependence on external inputs and partly due to their lack of financial capacity to meet household emergencies. Farmers' dependence on middlemen and traders for access to market. Alternatives aim at eliminating or significantly reducing the role of traders and middlemen by forging closer links between farmers and consumers.
13. Various processes and mechanisms are key to building the capacity and confidence of farmers as the most important actor in the commodity chain, as well as build the trust among farmers, consumers and intermediary organizations. The people-based development paradigm that guide these alternatives are evident in the built-in strategies and approaches in community organizing, community development, capacity building and education that are integrated in

their activities. These are based on strong community organizing strategies with their respective successes hinged on the strengths and potentials of the farmers, people's organizations and intermediary organizations that they work with.

14. Alternative models advanced by civil society organizations involve holistic approach to the problems facing small-scale farmers, from inputs and production, to processing and marketing. Interventions are not solely focused on specific aspects of the commodity chain but embrace the entire system in one holistic package comprised of interconnected components. These involved interventions concerning agricultural inputs, credit or financial support mechanisms, production assistance, technical support, capacity building, access to markets, linkages with consumers and even facilitating exports – in a conscious effort to present a fundamentally different approach in tackling old problems.

Given the above context, comments and questions are:

15. Will the WDR report influence governments and command more investments for more pro-small farmer trade? Business interest is the obvious biggest reason why there is investment in agriculture. Bringing agriculture to market is crucial but it will primarily serve the big players in the industry. Where do the small farmers come into play? Existing alternatives are for now a “drop in the bucket”. But if there's political will to support/enhance these, over time, there could be more happier stories from the farmers; more paradigm shifts towards entrepreneurship; more capacities and confidence among farmers/producers and some rules could change in their favor. Support could be in the form of comprehensive researches on and mapping of alternative trade initiatives; capacity building of farmers/ producers on crop-based organizing, capacity building of support agencies, and piloting schemes towards mainstreaming.
16. Regional trade talks are on the rise (US-ASEAN, EU-ASEAN, China-ASEAN, etc.), agriculture integration is for real, and is dictated by corporate interests – agribusiness expansion at national level; agriculture-deficit developed countries expanding their backyards; TNCs successfully worming their way in key business councils for their biotech agenda. Who will be accountable for the negative backlash of these forms of integration on the already very insecure situation of farmers. Governments should give priority to small farmers and producers, regulate the entry of and operation of transnational corporations, especially in the agriculture and food sectors, and guard the region against use of hazardous and/or untested technology.
17. Migration from agriculture is not normally a choice but forced upon poor rural people. Land is life to farmers, so if given enough reason to till their lands, they will, and not migrate to urban centers or become overseas workers and leave families behind. The social dimension of agriculture should highlight why it is imperative to invest in a sustainable rural industrialization anchored on farmers' productive participation in farming and other off-farm livelihood opportunities. The overview suggests that migration is a given, if you are a failed resource/land user; and that government is there to provide safety nets - human capital development to ease transfer or to create alternative off-farm opportunities in the countryside. Most governments failed on this and even more failed in ensuring that migration is minimized in the first place.
18. New agriculture, which is more external market driven should not be pitted against old agriculture which was framed to respond to basic production needs. “Old agriculture” remains to be what is needed depending on the country context and the disposition of the

rural groups and communities. The issue of food security is sidelined in the new agriculture framework and should be fully discussed as an equally important reason of agriculture.

Other related Comments:

19. There should be an overview section dedicated to gender in agriculture. The role of women in agriculture should take primary space in the report. Responding to issues of rural women will have better chances of contributing to increase in productivity, greater entrepreneurship, improvement in child/mother nutrition and of the household conditions in the rural areas in general.
20. In regions frequently devastated by natural calamities it is the agriculture sector, small farmers/farm workers, that suffers the most. The recovery takes years and displacement is inevitable. A growing number of farmers are now eeking out livelihood as fishers, with farms rendered untenable by recent super typhoons, with crop recovery e.g. coconut taking at least three years. Insurance systems are simply not working and government interventions hardly sufficient and sustained. Disaster preparedness and management intervention is weak in the agriculture sector.
21. The report should highlight need for investment on young farmers given global issue of ageing population in agriculture. In ASEAN alone, youth comprises 65% of its population. There is no natural inclination nor reasonable incentives for young people to be in the agriculture sector.
22. Strengthening extension services of universities to farmers/producers organizations. Universities in Taiwan and South Korea have proven that good extension services will result to better incomes and stronger farmer organizations and more confident farming communities.