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Mr. H. Melicheck is a professor at the Institute for Rural Development at The University of Goettinge, Germany. The Review of Bibliography Review The Latest Political and Economic Change Impact Perspectives, Opportunities and Challenges concluding World Agriculture has undergone radical changes over the past few decades. Agricultural production has increased and world food supplies are 18 per cent higher than they were 30 years ago. Between 1961 and 1990, food supplies to developing countries increased by 27 per cent, from 1,945 to 2,474 calories per day, while their population grew from 2.1 billion to almost 4.0 billion (FAO, 1995b: 427). However, while the sector is not, on average, driven by population growth and demand for agricultural products, many countries and populations have been spared. Progress has been little in some countries, and in sub-Saharan Africa the level of nutrition has actually declined. Worldwide, some 800 million people are still chronically malnourished. Moreover, the rate of growth in agricultural production has not helped to reduce poverty. By contrast, in the 1980s, average income declined in 46 of the 82 developing countries reviewed by FAO. Both Africa and Latin America have been particularly affected on a regional basis. In the 1980s, the proportion of the poor increased from 41 per cent to 47 per cent (FAO, 1994: 5). This situation has many causes, ranging from agro-climatic conditions to changes in international commodity prices to government policy. Misguided public policies and priorities do not recognize the importance of the agricultural sector in the overall development process. In many developing countries, the sector has been forgotten or taxed directly. Proceeds from agricultural taxation were used to finance the development of other sectors, mainly industry and manufacturing, while only a small percentage was returned to agriculture. However, the experience of southern and south-east Asia demonstrates the importance of agricultural-based development strategies, in which the transfer of non-agricultural resources is the result of over-production in agriculture rather than over-production. From Japan to Indonesia, governments have followed a strategy that has given priority to agriculture, especially to improving the productivity of rice farmers and farmers, to ensure food security. Investments have been made to improve the efficiency of domestic marketing systems in rural areas. On the contrary, many African countries underestimate the agricultural sector and rural infrastructure and are trying to displace markets rather than invest in their efficiency. Since 1960, the rice-based south-east Asian economy has outpaced the sub-Saharan Africa, based on coarse grain and root crops. Much of Africa's failures and the successes of south-east Asian countries can be attributed to differential attitudes towards the agricultural sector (Timmer, 1994: 13). In the early 1980s, deadlines collapsed as oil prices soared and the prices of other commodities fell, increasing the difficult debt burden of many developing countries. Between 1982 and 1991, total foreign debt in sub-Saharan Africa rose from \$57 billion to \$144 billion. Latin America's total external debt rose from \$354 billion to \$470 billion. In order to overcome these financial difficulties and enable countries to repay their international debt, the World Bank introduced structural adjustment and stabilization programmes in the 1980s that required changes in economic policies and governance, as well as institutional reforms. They implied a reduction in the role of the state, support for the private sector, the dismantling of parastatal agencies such as marketing boards, the abolition of subsidies and the devaluation of inflated exchange rates. Because of the need for immediate economic benefits, many countries are in favour of large-scale agricultural enterprises that produce monocrop-export crops and neglect the small-scale farmers sector, whose situation has deteriorated, leading to increased poverty, debt and growth without land. Without land and with almost no land, the rural population is the largest single group of people suffering from poverty. About 30 million people in developing countries without land, 138 million with almost no land, and the number of people in this category is growing throughout the developing world, especially in south Asia. Resources for the poor and unnamed are dwindling, and arable land expansion is growing more slowly than that of the rural population. Up to 70 million people, mostly from developing countries, work legally or illegally in other countries in search of work and income. Every year, more than one million people migrate constantly. In addition, the number of refugees is constantly increasing due to unfavourable political and ethnic conditions. It grew from 2.8 million in 1976 to 17.3 million in 1990 (FAO, 1994: 5). For most developing countries, especially in Africa and Latin America, the 1980s were a lost decade. Policies and strategies to reduce poverty in a few isolated projects, even if successful, will not yield the expected results, as they are implemented within a political and economic framework that is not conducive to rural development. On the other hand, many indicators of social activity, such as literacy rates, disease eradication or at least suppression, life expectancy, secondary school attendance, infant and child mortality, and population growth rates in developing countries as a whole, have continued to improve. However, for some of them, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, they have deteriorated. In Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1980s, achieving the goals of military power and socio-economic progress have become increasingly difficult. The resulting strains strains centrally planned economic systems have accelerated major transformations that began in the late 1980s. One of the main reasons for the low performance of the agricultural sector is the intensively centrally planned economic chat, working through large production units, and not incentives for private initiative. However, while the productivity of socialist agricultural enterprises was low, they guaranteed employment, income and a modest but fairly balanced standard of living for the majority of the rural population. The recent political and economic changes that have taken place in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union marked the beginning of a difficult and painful transition to a more open market economy. In the early stages of this process, traditional trading models were interrupted, real kaput revenues fell sharply, demand declined and production, processing and distribution were disrupted. In the transition process, even the most basic legal and economic institutions must be adjusted to enable the private sector to operate within a functioning market economy. Political and economic changes were not limited to the former socialist countries of Europe. They have also taken place in many developing countries. In order to overcome the debt burden, many developing countries have continued their policy and structural adjustment programmes, reduced public spending and intervention in agricultural and production markets, gradually reduced subsidies and privatized the old parastatals. These reforms were aimed at reducing government intervention in production by gradually transferring to the private or cooperative sector areas such as resource allocation, agricultural credit, product marketing and agricultural infrastructure. As a result, the State is less and less involved in the management of rural development projects. Its activities will increasingly be limited to providing favourable political and structural conditions for rural development under the auspices of other agencies. At the end of the 1980s, when the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on social status became apparent, the focus was again on the human dimension of development. This orientation had a number of important consequences. First, it was recognized that adjustments should be made with a human face, in such a way as to mitigate its excessive effects and alleviate acute inequalities and social difficulties. Secondly, the importance of people's knowledge, skills and abilities, along with the relevant institutions, was recognized to enable them to participate in development. Thirdly, the need to strengthen food security and nutrition policies has become apparent that access to food is often more dependent on income than on supply. Further, the focus was on the need for sustainable agriculture and rural development. Many Governments have also begun to reduce their support for state-owned cooperatives and have encouraged farmers to establish new cooperatives based on voluntary membership and managed and funded by their members. A number of countries, such as Fiji, Kenya, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda, have enacted new cooperation laws that transform former state-controlled cooperatives into voluntary organizations. In Ethiopia, India, Laos, Vietnam and zambia, such laws are in preparation. The rise of democracy and the widespread decentralization of power have enabled the rural poor to make new claims against their political representatives. Several rural development programmes, particularly in Latin America, are managed by NGOs using resources allocated by central or local authorities. The role of NGOs and the private sector in rural development will be further enhanced in the face of declining public budgets and services. Growing environmental problems associated with massive deforestation in the wet tropics, deforestation and soil erosion in catchments and depletion of underground water tables have increased interest in rural development strategies that internalize some of the external factors caused by poverty. The debt crisis has further increased the cost of these external factors, such as the need to import food and oil, as reservoirs are rapidly eroding as a result of soil erosion in catchments. The possibility of using rural development to promote environmental protection and the transfer of resources by taxing those who benefit from the reduction of external poverty has opened up new approaches. (De Gianvri and Sadoulet, 1993: 143) In the field of land ownership, researchers and policy makers, especially in Africa, are increasingly aware of the importance of ordinary rights and the participation of local communities in the management of natural resources. Whereas in the past conventional land tenure systems and institutions were perceived as impeding agriculture, some countries are now paying due attention to traditional forms of access to land. For example, the 1993 Niger Rural Code Ordinance seeks to increase conventional land rights to written rights and thereby promotes development from an informal market to a more formal market that will allow for safe land transactions. These new approaches to rural development are only beginning to emerge, but some of their main traits can be discerned. They will rely heavily on a new partnership between the Government and grassroots organizations. They will be based not only on the transfer of resources, such as subsidized loans, but also on the promotion of new institutions capable of mobilizing local resources, such as Grameen Bank. They will have a strong non-agricultural component to record the impact of agricultural development. These events will be as far as possible in rural areas, in order to provide additional sources of income for peasant households and to reduce the external costs of rapid urban migration. And they will have a strong environmental goal, including the transfer of resources as payment for reducing the increasingly costly national and international external poverty (Ibid: 144). In addition, in many countries, the capacity, authority and autonomy of the State are being undermined by the rapid development of transnational corporations (TNCs) in finance, transport, communications, production and consumption, i.e. globalization (UNRISD, 1995). Many national institutions have fallen into disrepair and Governments have failed to protect their people from disturbing trends in the international economic environment. Among the most powerful of these external forces are TNCs, many of which are financially more powerful than national economies. Their main objective is to maximize profits, and this goal is often achieved without concern for the economic, social and environmental conditions of the developing countries in which they operate. The impact of RESULT OF MARKET-ORIENTED economic reforms, some developing countries have been successful in stabilizing their economies, as evidenced by the widespread decline in inflation and political and social stability in some countries and areas previously affected by civil unrest and armed confrontation. China, which began its economic reform in 1978 with the introduction of the household responsibility system, has achieved unprecedented growth in its economy and agricultural sector. China's economy grew by 13.4 per cent in 1993 and 11.8 per cent in 1994. Despite unfavourable weather conditions, agricultural growth has been 3.5 per cent in recent years (FAO, 1995a: 105). In Central and Eastern Europe, however, the agricultural sector has experienced severe shocks. With the breakdown of the command economy, production structures and regional trade, agricultural production has fallen sharply in all countries of the region and food consumption per year has fallen. Large groups of the population face malnutrition because of declining incomes. In some cases, the changes were so large and severe that they seriously disrupted national food balances and jeopardized the functioning of national, regional and local food supply and trade systems. While there are some encouraging signs in some individual countries that agricultural production has increased slightly over the past two years, output has not yet reached pre-revolutionary levels. In Africa, some countries have benefited greatly from the new opportunities offered by recent developments in agricultural commodity markets. It is estimated that the benefits of improved terms of trade benefiting 13 sub-Saharan Africa by an average of four per cent of GDP (FAO, 1995a: 95). Although the devaluation of the CFA in early 1994 led to the impact on the export sectors and economies of the 14 CFA member countries has also led to a sharp rise in the prices of imported goods, including food, which has led to a wave of strikes and demonstrations in a number of countries. Negative social consequences are still being felt. Living standards in urban areas have declined and access to health care and resources for schools has been severely affected (FAO, 1995a: 78). In India, the substantial nominal devaluation of the rupee in June 1991 made the export of many of its agricultural commodities more competitive. Exports of rice, wheat, cotton, fruits and vegetables, fish and fish products, as well as meat received a huge boost. Again, however, the rise in local food and grain prices has had a negative impact on the food security of the poor. Poverty has increased over the past three years. In Mexico, the devaluation of the peso has significantly changed the price relationship between domestic and imported products. Higher prices for imported grain have led to the competitiveness of domestic producers, increased direct purchases from local producers of flour and livestock industry, and reduced purchases of imported grain. In Venezuela, too, the severe devaluation of the bolivar has led to a decline in food imports. At the same time, farmers have been hit by a sharp decline in subsidized lending and price support measures (FAO, 1995a: 132). In the Middle East, the effects of trade liberalization are also negative. The region is heavily dependent on food imports, so a reduction in subsidies for European agricultural goods (which account for more than 75 per cent of the cost of production) is expected to increase the budgetary expenditure on food imports. The impact of political reforms on the poor varies considerably among the different groups of the population. The amount of benefit or loss will depend on their income, resources, education and access to productive resources such as land. Cuts in social safety nets, including cuts in public spending on wages and social welfare programmes for the poor, as well as rising prices for imported goods, including basic goods such as food, medicine and fuel, have had a detrimental effect on the weakest segments of the population as a result of the devaluation. While higher agricultural prices are expected to have a positive impact on the agricultural sector as a whole, the distribution of profits and losses among the rural population depends on whether they are net sellers or buyers of food, whether they are producers of export or natural crops, and whether they have access to land, labour, credit, input and commodities. Structural adjustment programmes have had a positive impact on promoting the decentralization of authority and responsibility for local and authorities and local popular organizations. In the 1980s, the massive increase in the number of grass-roots organizations was partly traditional social organizations by socialist and military governments. These new organizations have taken the form of community groups, district associations, producer associations, etc. Gradually, a new trend towards greater democracy has emerged, giving the rural population more opportunities to participate through the organizations of their choice in the decision-making process. The decline in the influence of the state has also affected the flow of information, as censorship has been relaxed in many countries. In addition to rapid advances in communications and information technology, the international circulation of news and development models has important implications for the culture of developing countries. On the one hand, it has opened windows to the outside world in closed societies, for example, with regard to the exercise of democratic freedom and the enrichment of life through contacts with other cultures and societies. On the other hand, the demonstration of violence between people, human confusion with economic values and the widespread glorification of the Western way of life, inaccessible to the masses in developing countries, are actively directed against the development policy based on solidarity, self-confidence and long-term efforts (UNESCO, 1995: 32). In the area of land ownership changes, few countries have followed East Asia's lead. In the 1940s and 1950s, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan implemented radical land reforms that promoted production and justice. In some countries in Asia and the Middle East, land reform measures adopted in the late 1950s and early 1960s have yielded decent results. Efforts in Latin America were suffering from a lack of support services that put the beneficiaries of reform in a difficult position and gave the impression that other, less radical measures could replace reform. Currently, only a few countries, such as the Philippines, are implementing a land redistribution programme. Political considerations and vested interests are the main reasons for the lack of progress in land reform in its traditional form. However, there are still many countries where land reform has a role to play. The country in dire need of agrarian reform is South Africa, where the average size of a farm in white areas is 1,300 hectares, while in black areas it is only 1 hectare. In Algeria, the conversion of public farms into private farms is changing the historical structure of production in the agricultural sector and improving the efficiency and competitiveness of agricultural activities. In Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, such transformations occur at different speeds and While some countries have made significant progress in privatizing the landed property, others are reluctant to leave the former production structures and seek to restructure the governance structure. However, there is a strong polarization between former cooperative administrators and ordinary cooperative members, with the result that the former often acquire cooperative assets under false pre-installations and at the expense of the latter. Perspectives, opportunities and challenges like 1990s UNFOLDED, a new PATTERN of international relations began to emerge. The end of the cold war reduced political tensions between the super-Powers and reduced military expenditures of developed and former centrally planned economies. Nevertheless, the resources of the peace dividends have not yet been used to assist developing countries. The transition from centrally planned to market-based economic systems has been accompanied by problems (assuming they will be short-term) economic depression and unemployment. As a result, some economic assistance has been directed from developing countries to central and eastern European and Central Asian countries, which are in transition. In agriculture and rural development, the new economic environment has a number of advantages for some. Current changes in the direction of liberalization are expected to weigh the prices of agricultural products. It must be recognized, however, that this development would benefit only those commercial producers and farmers who had clear access to land, and that the rural poor and others who were net buyers of agricultural products would lose out in the process. Since it was unlikely that the traditional type of land reform initiated by the Government would be carried out during liberalization, new approaches to land reform needed to be explored. For example, the Government wanted to implement market reforms rather than State-controlled reform, which had proved costly and difficult to implement in zimbabwe and other parts of the world. The Government intends to reduce its support for large commercial farms in the hope that this can help the process of land reform and lead to the sale of land by those large farms that cannot survive in an unprotected environment. In addition, employees of large commercial farms will be provided with funding so that they can acquire equity and related ownership and decision-making powers in such enterprises. The experience of agrarian reform in Latin America and elsewhere seems to show that allowing the market to determine the future course of agriculture on the basis of a viable land market and market prices is the right step in this direction. This approach provides maximum stimuli, is more effective and avoids bureaucracy (Thiesenhusen, 1993: 17). Like the introduction of large-scale agriculture in a former centrally planned without the results expected of the expected economies of scale, many new governments have adopted a new land policy that facilitates the movement from group or collective farm to land cultivator (Thiesenhusen, 1993: 13). However, this policy has not been adopted by many former members of cooperatives. Since they have become specialized agricultural workers on these farms, they have neither the skills nor the experience nor the physical prerequisites for self-management of the farm. Therefore, many members of the cooperative in Central and Eastern Europe chose to remain in the farming unit even after it had changed its form of organization and operation. However, in order for these enterprises to be suitable for the new economic environment, a flexible type of management is needed that is able to respond to the needs of the market and enable participation in decision-making. The ultimate goal of agrarian reform and rural development is to reduce rural poverty. As Governments gradually reduce their leadership roles, as well as their staff, new actors such as cooperatives and NGOs must fill the gap. Because of their knowledge of local conditions, NGOs are often more positioned to address rural development problems than government officials living in urban centres. However, a word of caution is needed. While many NGOs have been successful in promoting rural development, they have made less progress in making micro-level projects a development that is important at the macro level. Literature usually suggests or hopes that the experience of micro-uranium is generalized, but rarely explores the mechanisms by which project-oriented NGOs can overcome the spatial and temporal limitations of the project approach (Vivian, 1994: 168). RECENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL changes that have taken place in many developing countries and in transition countries provide new opportunities and challenges for rural development and rural poverty reduction. However, much remains to be done to define and implement a new approach to rural development adapted to market liberalization, staff reductions, newly restored democratic rights and the development of grass-roots organizations, new social actors and new social movements (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 1993: 144). While some structural adjustment programmes, such as the elimination of input subsidies and the pricing of production, will improve agricultural efficiency, accelerating agricultural growth alone will not reduce poverty. The growth of agriculture takes too long to seep into the rural poor. It is difficult to determine the correct distinction between and private participation in development, but there is increasingly general agreement that development depends to a large extent on organization, good governance, institutions, people's participation in decision-making and The need for community participation in development is increasingly recognized. National Governments are encouraged to consider decentralized approaches to their social welfare and development programmes. Such decentralization would increase the efficiency of public spending and be more cost-effective, as projects would be more selective in their approach to local needs. Local employment will increase, and as the local community will in some sense spend its own money and residents feel more involved in this process, this will be an additional incentive to reduce costs and increase productivity. Development failures in the past have been largely due to attempts by Governments and donor agencies to do too much for too many groups by bypassing market activities. Recent experience has shown that, in order to improve this situation, Governments have a role to play in correcting the conditions that lead to market day, such as informational deficiencies, lack of clear property rights and lack of a stable legal framework. The Government's market framework also has other important regulatory responsibilities, such as establishing and enforcing property rights, ensuring public goods, carrying out specific measures to reduce poverty and improve food security and nutrition. While the State is gradually moving away from productive and commercial activities and focusing its role on targeting and regulating rural development activities, there is an urgent need to protect producers and consumers, protect national resources and provide preferential treatment to villages in need. Governments must play an important role in this process in order to prevent market forces from exploiting weaker ones. In the past, policies had been aimed at large farms, although it had been known that small agriculture was often more efficient in relation to energy resource-to-product yields, promoted biodiversity and provided a stable employment base. Small agriculture also provides a favourable base for rural communities, as it has a strong multiplier effect. This, in turn, contributes to the creation of stronger institutions of sustainable development. The new concept of rural development should include a shift from caring for large farmers as symbols of growth to recognizing small producers as worthy of investment and capable of producing value added (Mafeje, 1993: 22). However, small producers have serious problems. Lack of irrigation and the inability to purchase chemical fertilizers and other resources mean that small farmers are unable to fully new high-yielding varieties. Small farmers are unable to influence agricultural prices, which are often kept low as a result of the Government's deliberate attempts to keep food prices low for urban consumers. To overcome the difficulties of a small enterprise manufacturers have no choice but to organize, self-help, pool their resources and cooperate with each other. Land reform could significantly ease pressure on marginal and environmentally unsustainable land, as land distribution is largely distorted in many developing countries, with most agricultural land concentrated in a small percentage of reserves. However, land reform is the most difficult to implement, as land ownership and land distribution reflect the structure of power within the country. One possibility of improving the situation with land ownership without radical .reform is the introduction of a progressive land tax. This will encourage intensive use of land and discourage the ownership of land for speculative purposes. The attractiveness of land to the rich can also be reduced by the abolition of input subsidies. Since significant progress can be expected in land redistribution programmes in a market economy, land ownership issues must be dealt with indirectly, i.e. by reducing subsidies, increasing land tax, providing credit and supporting the smooth functioning of the land market. Recognition and enforcement of traditional land rights can provide the safeguards needed by the poor to extend their time horizons and thereby enhance their resource management capabilities. This recognition should include traditional land tenure mechanisms, such as common property regimes, which are essential for the sustainable use of natural resources. Shared property regimes, as opposed to open access, can also provide an institutional basis for internalizing external factors by recognizing the poor as stakeholders in the management of natural resources. The common ownership framework can contribute to the collective action needed for integrated approaches to sustainable development by pooling knowledge and resources. Past experience has shown that centralized political systems and policies that do not pay enough attention to the agricultural sector do not contribute to reducing rural poverty. The success of rural development requires a favourable political environment, as isolated projects and efforts will not be able to operate in an unfavourable political and economic environment. Governments should devote their limited resources to what is necessary to function effectively in the economy and society. Even in a market economy, Governments have a responsibility to help the poor improve their productivity and thus try to narrow the gap between rich and poor. The bibliography of Gianvri, A. and Sadoulet, E. 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