

Editorials

Emerging rural development issues

About one in every five people in the world live in extreme poverty (1.2 billions people) and more than 900 million people suffer from under nutrition. Poverty is predominantly rural. Three quarters of the worlds' poor live in rural areas where they are mainly involved on agriculture and related activities. So poverty target goals can't be achieved unless address rural poverty. In most developing countries agriculture is the largest employer and revenue creator. For this reason agriculture remains even in 21st century a critical sector for economic development and poverty reduction as well as for environmental sustainability. This key role is also highlighted by the fact that high and volatile food prices and weak economic growth in most developing countries could determine a falling into poverty for other 250 million people.

It is now widely recognized that subsidies and protectionist trade policies of the industrialized countries are damaging for developing countries. Industrialized countries' export subsidies also caused distortions in the domestic markets of developing countries creating difficulties for local producers. International and national policies affect the ability of poor countries to use the power of agriculture to stimulate growth and reduce poverty. Researchers have to produce continue efforts to analyze global agricultural trade reform and to suggest new options of reforming agricultural trade for developing countries.

Agricultural and rural development in developing countries must be founded on higher productivity of small-scale farmers. A more efficient access to land, water, technology, financial resources and other institutions that support poor farmers is fundamental. At the same time, the improvement of transport and communication infrastructure, storage facilities, crop processing technologies and marketing solutions are needed to face the new market environment. Also the adoption of horizontal mechanisms of integration represents an important challenge for small-scale farmers to entry effectively domestic and international markets.

Climate change significantly affects the rural poor who mainly depend on agriculture and fishery. Studies on the mitigation and adaptation of the impacts of climate change have strategic relevance. In this context main fields of research are represented by: the analysis of impacts of climate change on agriculture productivity and food security, the adaptation options for agriculture and natural resources, the adaptation differences across different farming systems and landscapes. Taking into account these aspects the broad theme of relationships between agriculture and natural resources is gaining increasing importance. Specific issues in this context are represented by: the governance of natural resources, the trade-offs between resources, the improving of management practices, the support of sustainable production processes.

Again, lively rural economies are fundamental to eradicating poverty in rural communities and to support economic growth in poor countries. On this basis emerging rural development issues are also represented by: the increase of multi-functional and multi-spatial livelihoods in the rural space with the consequence that the support of the non-farm rural economy is as important as agricultural support; the new challenges faced by small-holder farming in less-favoured areas; a technological targeting more location specific; a rethinking of institutional capacity and governance; the mitigation measures for rural risks and vulnerability; the rethinking and revival of aid modalities.

The rural environment is continuously changing, the development thinking is changing and rural development policies need of systematic adaptations. These are the core messages and the new challenges the JDAE is launching to researchers, specialists and scholars to support the improvement of knowledge in so critical issues for the future of the world.

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