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Vol XL  
No. 2

ISSN 0019-5014

APRIL-  
JUNE  
1985

# INDIAN JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS



INDIAN SOCIETY OF  
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS,  
BOMBAY

## REVIEWS IN BRIEF

*Land, Food and People*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, Italy, 1984. Pp. xvi+96.

This study which was commissioned by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) was undertaken by the FAO in collaboration with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). The objective of the study was "to know if it was possible to calculate the potential populations that the land resources of developing countries could support, and to identify critical areas and countries that would be unable to support their present or projected populations from their own lands." The study used information from 117 developing countries (excluding those in East Asia) on soils and climates and compared these with the growth requirements of 15 major crops and grasslands pasture to assess potential food production and the population this could support. Since the level of farming has a great influence on yields, the assessment of the potential crop production was made on certain assumptions for three levels of inputs: (a) a *low level*, using no fertilizers, pesticides or improved seeds and no long-term conservation measures—equivalent to subsistence farming; (b) an *intermediate level*, using a basic package of farm inputs, conservation measures and improved cropping patterns on half the lands and (c) a *high level* with full use of all inputs, full conservation measures and the most productive mix of crops on all land—equivalent to Western European levels of farming. The major findings of this study are as follows: By the end of this century, the entire potentially cultivable lands of the developing countries which would be more than three times the cultivated area in 1975, could support only 1.6 times the expected population if traditional methods of farming continued to be used. At the intermediate and high levels of input use, they could support four times and nine times their 1975 populations respectively. Thus with the application of higher input levels and the use of all land resources, the developing countries as a whole would be capable of self-reliance in food supplies.

The country results however give considerable cause for concern. Out of the 117 countries, there were 54 countries in 1975, which would have been unable to feed their existing population from their own lands, using low inputs. These countries covered 2,221 million hectares or just over a third of the total land area, containing no less than 55 per cent of the total population or 1,072 million people. The entire land resources of these critical countries were capable of feeding only less than three-fourths of the total population at low level of input use. By 2,000, the number of critical countries with low inputs is expected to increase to 64, 29 of them in Africa, which would be unable to feed their projected population from their own land resources. Because India will cease to be critical at the low input use level, owing to planned increases in irrigation production, the total population and extent of critical countries for low inputs are projected to decline by 2000. But the excess of the population over the supporting capacity would increase

to 503 million or 48 per cent of the population of the critical countries. Increasing the levels of use of inputs, intensifying the use of land and expansion of cultivated area are considered important if future populations are to be even minimally fed. Aid, including food aid, will be indispensable in bridging the period before land, food and populations can be balanced. All critical countries could benefit from reduced population growth rates: in all cases the increases in agricultural effort required to meet food needs would be less demanding or the additional imports required would be lower. Achieving higher input levels will involve access to technology or financing imports to meet the food deficits will require stable sources of foreign exchange. The study shows that there is potential for greatly increased self-sufficiency in food within developing countries as a whole, and within four out of five developing regions of the world. It also issues a warning of the danger facing mankind if the rate of growth of population in the developing countries is not slowed down. Though these conclusions are of an indicative nature because of the large number of assumptions made, the study serves a useful purpose in creating awareness among the governments of the developing countries of the immensity of the tasks confronting them in balancing their populations with their potential for producing food from their own lands.

*Promoting Third World Agriculture: Lessons of Recent Experience*, Christopher D. Gerrab, The North-South Institute, Ottawa, Canada, 1983. Pp. V+64. \$ 6.00.

This study examines the evolution, applications and results of the new strategy of agricultural development in the third world countries with a view to helping to design and implement more effective agricultural development policies and programmes. The first chapter deals with the background to the origin of the new strategies since the seventies and the economic development theories that preceded them. Chapter 2 discusses the major requirements for broadly-based agricultural development and provides a framework within which to assess the activities of selected Western donor countries and developing countries. Chapter 3 reviews, assesses and gleans lessons from the experience of selected donor agencies during the decade ending 1980, based on an extensive study of the relevant documentation and interviews with officials in several major donor agencies including the World Bank. Chapter 4 briefly reviews the steps taken by eighteen developing countries—five in Latin America, seven in Asia and six in Africa—to promote agricultural development during the seventies. It gives examples where technical progress has been both beneficial and harmful. The last chapter presents the summary and conclusions of the study.

The new strategies of agricultural development represented a major reversal from previous approaches that had dominated development thought and action since the end of World War II. Previous strategies viewed the agricultural sector as a holding sector, weighed down by surplus labour whose

marginal value product was negligible, and not a major source of economic growth in its own right. They had emphasized investment in the modern industrial sector of developing countries and had argued that the benefits of such investments would eventually trickle down to the agricultural sector. These strategies came under increasing attack in the sixties because industrial development did not trickle down, industrial employment did not expand as rapidly as predicted and agricultural labour was not surplus. Instead, lack of agricultural development constituted a major bottleneck to overall development as domestic food prices rose or food imports increased. The new strategies gained strength from the world food crisis of 1972-74, and they contributed to the basic needs approach to development. The new development strategies brought forth a burst of activity in the mid-seventies. International assistance to agricultural development increased in real terms and as a share of total development assistance but it appears to have levelled off around 1978. The study has documented some of the difficulties faced by the donor agencies in promoting agricultural development. These difficulties are identified to be (a) location-specific nature of the new agricultural technology and the non-replicability of agricultural projects, (b) greater administrative costs in supporting agricultural development projects, (c) lack of administrative capacity to implement agricultural projects and (d) leakages of benefits. It is suggested that governments of developing countries can promote broadly-based agricultural development by the introduction of a favourable incentive structure, such as investment in agricultural research, education and transportation systems, bringing about institutional reforms and operating a macro-economic environment conducive to the expansion of agricultural production. The study includes a select bibliography on development studies.

*Rural Transformation: A Select Annotated Bibliography of Special Programmes*, National Institute of Rural Development, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad-30, 1984. Pp. xi + 269.

This compilation covers literature on Centrally-sponsored special programmes relating to rural development and lists 1,145 references covering published/unpublished books, journals and signed newspaper articles since the seventies, with brief annotations of the selected references. The 22 special programmes covered in this annotated bibliography are grouped under four major heads, viz., Area-specific programmes, Target group-specific programmes, Employment programmes and Social welfare programmes. The last section lists up references to research publications and reports which could not be grouped strictly under the four major categories but have a definite bearing on one or the other aspects of these programmes. As many as 543 references are listed under the target group-specific programmes, followed by 241 entries under area-specific programmes, 171 entries under social welfare programmes, 107 under employment programmes and

83 under related aspects of special programmes. The bibliography first lists up generalised aspects under each individual programme alphabetically under the author/title, as the case may be. This is followed by listing of literature pertaining to each State arranged again alphabetically. In the case of joint-author contributions published in periodicals, the listing has been done under both the authors, followed by title of the article, name of the periodical, volume, issue number in parenthesis, pagination and month and year of the publication. For books, the entry has invariably been made under the first author followed by title, imprint and collation and in the case of books with more than one author, the names of joint authors are indicated in the author statement following the title. The compilation includes an author index which provides cross-references to the entries in the bibliography. The annotations to the references summarise the important points or the main trends of the arguments contained in them. The staff of the Centre on Rural Documentation of the Institute needs to be congratulated for their painstaking efforts in compiling this bibliography which will be found very useful by researchers and by those interested in the implementation of various rural development programmes in India.

*Meeting Food Needs in a Context of Change*, Hartmut Schneider, Development Centre, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, France, 1984. Pp. 150.

This report reviews some critical issues for the food systems and policies of developing countries which, as a group, find it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of their expanding population. Besides drawing on the literature at large, it relies on papers prepared in the context of the research programme initiated by the Development Centre on "Food for All: The Capacity of Developing Countries to Meet Their Food Requirements" which involved the collaboration of researchers and institutions in developing countries and OECD Member countries. The emphasis is placed in this report on the links between national food systems and international trade. The analysis seeks to combine different perspectives and to strike a balance between opposing schools of thought, one emphasizing the distortions which exposure to the world economy may impose on the domestic food systems of developing countries, and the other concentrating on the potential gains from a high degree of integration of agriculture of the developing countries in the world economy through foreign trade. It analyses the implications of alternative policies for different groups of producers and consumers.

The report is divided into five chapters. The first chapter considers major economic propositions and issues relating to food in the overall economic structure. The next two chapters analyse the impact of agricultural exports and imports on the domestic food chain respectively. The fourth chapter reviews the issues and mechanisms of domestic structural change to emphasize their major role in the food systems of many developing countries.

It also examines the general hypotheses of a bias in development policies against food production for domestic consumption, against small producers and in favour of urban areas. An effort has also been made to identify policies for mitigating distortions and reducing insecurity at minimal cost. The last chapter considers the outlook for the future and deals with questions of needs and resource use. It highlights policy options with which governments will be confronted in tackling food problems, paying increased attention to socio-economic differences among the people affected. The study suggests the need for (a) identifying and implementing the possibilities of reconciling the production of food crops for domestic consumption with the production of export crops, (b) establishing a balance between food import requirements and import capacity, (c) reducing urban bias in the development strategy and in the allocation of resources and (d) basic policies affecting the food system on analyses which distinguish between different groups of producer and consumers according to their resource endowments, needs, location and sociological patterns of behaviour. Though the report is aimed primarily at those who are involved in decision-making with regard to food policies of developing countries, it should also be of interest to those concerned with general development policies. The notes and references given at the end of each chapter and the bibliography at the end enhance the usefulness of the study.