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Reviews in Brief

Public Policy for the Promotion of Family Farms in Italy, Eric B. Shearer and Giuseppe Barbero, World Bank Discussion Papers 262, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., 1994. Pp. viii+70. \$ 7.95.

The study examines the pattern of land ownership and its distribution in Italy in the post-World War II period and the government's measures in support of the land market for the formation and consolidation of family farms and functioning and management of the special agency created in 1948 to help the eligible farm families or co-operatives to purchase land with fiscal and financial subsidies. It is divided into parts, each of which contains four chapters. The study presents a summary of the overall measures and of the peasants' relation to land market, within the context of Italy's post-war agrarian situation, provides an overview of the impact on the land market and tenure structure of the general fiscal and financial incentives enacted respectively in 1948 and 1965 and following the regional decentralisation of certain government functions in the mid-seventies. It also briefly analyses the purchasing power of the peasants in terms of land by comparing land prices, farm wages and general inflation during 1957-90. The study further describes the history, structure, functions and operations of the special agency called *Cassa per la formazione della proprieta contadina* (Fund for the formation of peasant property) or *Cassa* in short and analyses its impact on the land market and the public cost in terms of the grant element represented by the subsidised interest rate. On the basis of historical data a few hypothetical cases going back to the earlier years are constructed to estimate the capital grant element in the *Cassa's* concessionary interest rate. A number of case studies of recent clients of the Fund are presented, which attempt to show the implications of the nominal interest versus a hypothetical positive rate for the per capita net farm income of farm dependent members of the households. A number of conclusions are drawn from the Italian experience which provides evidence on the potential and costs of market-assisted land reform. It is noted that the special agency which was created to act as intermediary between potential sellers and buyers and as long-term, low-interest lender helped 20,000 individual buyers and 166 farming co-operatives. The implicit capital grant element has fluctuated between 60 and 70 per cent from 1948 to 1991 and the average grant element per client family was equivalent to about US\$ 220,000 at 1991 prices, largely owing to the negatively real interest rate during a period of high inflation. The comparison of actual and hypothetical case studies reveals that, despite the largely favourable 'terms of trade' between land prices and farm wages since the sixties, many borrowers would not have been able to maintain a standard of living above the poverty line if they had to pay the full market price for both the land and credit. This appears to validate the need for a grant element in support of the public strategy. On the whole, the study comes to the conclusion that Italy's policies and measures in support of the family farm since the World War II are fully justified.

Managing Rural Development: Health and Energy Programmes in India, Edited by Hein Streefkerk and T.K. Moulik, Indo-Dutch Studies on Development Alternatives-7, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1991. Pp. 225. Rs. 220.00.

The volume is the seventh in the series of studies of the Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development (IDPAD). The nine papers included in this volume were presented at a seminar which was held at the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur in March 1986. In addition to these papers, the volume includes an 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion'. Most of the papers are based on field studies conducted in Gujarat by the Indo-Dutch scholars, which are the outcome of short exploratory investigations into the implementation of new technologies in rural areas of India. Divided into two parts, Part I contains five case study papers on rural health programmes and Part II includes four papers on energy programmes. Each part is preceded by an introduction. The papers included in this volume make use of two different perspectives, namely, strategic management approach to rural development and the anthropological-sociological one which are discussed in the introductory chapter. The introductory chapter describes the main features of the social structure of Gujarat and the characteristics of cultural mode, and discusses the impact of cultural modes on the management of technology programmes. The five papers in the section on rural health programmes discuss the conditions for reducing infant and child mortality, management and utilisation of immunisation and oral dehydration therapy in rural Gujarat, the contradiction between public and private treatment for tuberculosis in South Gujarat and the public and private nexus in the operative of drinking water supply systems, and the official transfer system and its repercussions on public health personnel in Gujarat. The studies, *inter alia*, emphasise the limiting effects of technology on the efficiency and managerability of the rural health programmes. It is argued that the operation and maintenance of public provisions such as drinking water should be the responsibility of administrators less involved in village power systems.

The papers included in the section on rural energy programmes focus on strategic management of the national biogas development project in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, problems in the implementation of biogas programmes in Rajasthan, the role of women, especially poor rural women, in projects and programmes which distribute improved (smokeless) *chulhas* (ovens) in Gujarat, and the formal objectives and actual criteria of the various governmental and non-governmental organisations involved in stove and social forestry projects in Gujarat. The studies included in this section highlight the fact the use of modern sources of energy is, like modern health care, unequally distributed between urban and rural areas and between rich and poor. Most of the villagers cannot afford to use commercial fuels. Cooking accounts for more than 85 per cent of the energy required in the villages, which is obtained from firewood, dung-cakes and agricultural wastes. Production and implementation of biogas plants, improved stoves, windmills and solar energy systems are designed to improve the rural living standards. The analysis of the national biogas development project in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu from the perspective of strategic management reveals that there is a lack of management tools, e.g., the analysis of needs or monitoring during the process of strategy development. The implementation of biogas programmes in Rajasthan highlights the differences between general macro assessments and specific local circumstances and needs. Active participation by the beneficiaries in the

programmes is advocated to bridge this gap. Improved stoves in the villages, if well constructed and maintained, have considerably higher energy efficiency than the traditional stoves and contribute to improving the health of village women. It is suggested that since women have much easier access to the female beneficiaries in the villages, the latter should be motivated to use the new technology. It is also noted that programmes are most successful when NGOs have permanent employees to build and repair stoves. The volume will be of interest to policy makers, health and energy specialists, sociologists, environmental scientists and those concerned with management of rural development.

Seed Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: Issues and Options, V. Venkatesan, World Bank Discussion Papers 266, Africa Technical Department Series, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., 1994. Pp. xi+112. \$ 8.95.

Seed is one of the most important constituents of the total inputs employed in increasing agricultural production. However, the advancements in the seed development strategies have not kept pace with the level of agricultural development. The present study is part of Africa's efforts to evolve a seed system that is farm-specific and which will accelerate agricultural development. It analyses the issues relating to the different components of seed systems and the various options available to the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa while developing seed systems. It describes the implications of seed policy, particularly the regulatory framework of the seed system for the attainment of institutional objectives such as the development of informal seed systems and the private sector seed industry. The various phases of seed development and its linkages with other systems like the cropping pattern, legal framework, research and extension, infrastructure and various economic policies and the issues regarding seed production, pricing, marketing and demand are discussed in detail.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, nearly 70 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture which accounts for 32 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is the main earner of foreign exchange resources. However, the increase in agricultural production has not kept pace with the rapidly growing population. This is because, even though a substantial amount of foreign exchange is spent on fertilisers, no effort has been made to replace the modern seed varieties with the traditional ones. The non-availability of good quality seed, particularly of modern varieties, at prices which farmers can afford is one of the major constraints to a sustained increase in the uptake of technology. The need is stressed to develop a system that would meet the needs of a gamut of farmers. Taking into account the agro-climatic factors, policy environment, infrastructure, particularly the rural roads network, research and extension efforts and support services, the study comes to the conclusion that a seed system should be evolved which are both crop-specific and country-specific. The study underscores the critical role of the government in the development of the seed system. It is argued that the seed industry needs to be deregulated with both the formal and informal seed systems providing quality seeds to the consumers, the former consisting of public sector research institutions, public and private sector seed production and marketing agencies, etc. and the latter consisting of a large number of farmers. It further highlights the fact that the various components of a seed system are interrelated, which also has linkages with other systems, particularly research and extension systems. The need is also emphasised

for expanding farmer-based seed production programmes to include not only the traditional but the modern varieties as well. The annexures at the end of the book provide a brief account of the World Bank and other lending agencies' support to seed development in Sub-Saharan Africa and of the seed systems in some selected countries including India.

Agricultural Sustainability, Growth and Poverty Alleviation: Issues and Policies, Edited by Stephen A. Vosti, Thomas Reardon and Winfried von Urff, German Foundation for International Development, Feldafing, Germany and International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., 1991. Pp. xiii+518.

This volume embodies the proceedings of an international conference which was held in Feldafing, Federal Republic of Germany in September 1991, jointly organised by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the German Foundation for International Development. The volume focuses on five key issues related to working definitions of sustainability and the interrelationships among agricultural sustainability, growth and poverty alleviation in three critical agro-ecological zones, namely, the humid/sub-humid tropics, the arid/semi-arid tropics and the tropical highlands. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of policy in determining and potentially modifying these links, and identifying gaps in policy and technical research. Divided into four parts, Part I of the volume provides an overview of the issues discussed at the Conference. Part II includes eleven plenary session papers, grouped under two sections. The presentation of each paper is followed by the comments of the discussant. The four papers grouped in the first section discuss respectively (i) the definition of sustainable development and growth and the issues related to sustainable development; (ii) environmental consequences of agricultural growth in the major agro-ecological zones of the tropics and the complementarities and trade-offs between agricultural growth and environmental protection; (iii) the links between sustainable agricultural growth and poverty and degradation; (iv) and the links between agricultural growth, environmental degradation, and nutrition and health and their implications for policy and research. The second section considers the effects of policy on, and options for, agricultural sustainability, growth and poverty alleviation. It includes seven papers and comments of the discussant on each paper. These papers deal respectively with (i) the relationship between trade and environment with special reference to agriculture in a developing country (Thailand); (ii) the role played by international development agencies with particular reference to World Bank experience in the promotion of sustainable agricultural growth; (iii) effect of climate change due to the emission of greenhouse gases on agricultural systems and its implications for agricultural sustainability; (iv) the effects of macro economics and sectoral policies on the development and use of key natural resources for agricultural and overall growth in developing countries with a variety of illustrations; (v) policy impacts on sustainability and productivity investments and land use in developing countries; (vi) accelerated resource degradation by Third World agriculture; and (vii) problems facing agricultural research institutions in developing sustainable agricultural technology.

The third part contains ten parallel session papers on agro-ecological/geopolitical regions, grouped under three sections. The three papers in the first section of this part deal

respectively with the conditions for the compatibility of agricultural growth and sustainability in the humid and sub-humid tropics of Africa, Asia and South America, followed by the comments of the discussants on these papers. In the second section which includes four papers, the first paper discusses the constraints and possibilities for some of the major policy and research initiatives currently introduced in the semi-arid tropics of India in developing improved farming systems for heterogeneous environments, improving management of groundwater resources and improving watershed development. In addition, the paper introduces an approach for assessing agricultural productivity and sustainability of potential technologies. The second paper explores the potential for and limits to sustainable growth in semi-arid Africa with a focus on the role of pastoralism. The paper argues that it is premature to contemplate sustainable growth until current trends in both human and biological resource degradation which is both a symptom and a cause of food insecurity, have been halted and reversed. The third paper analyses the sustainability aspects of agricultural development in semi-arid West Africa, focusing on the production prospects for sorghum and millets. Policy actions are suggested in four general areas which could contribute to agricultural sustainability in West African semi-arid tropics. The fourth paper in this section examines the strategies to improve rainfed agriculture and pastoralism in the medium to low potential areas in the semi-arid tropics of West Asia and North Africa, identifies the factors that contribute to resource degradation and suggests possible technical and policy solutions. The discussants' comments on these four papers are also included in the second section. The three papers in the third section of Part III discuss respectively the prospects and problems of sustainable agriculture in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya, in the tropical East African highlands and in the dry tropics of Central America in the context of sustainable agro-socio-pastoral systems, followed by the comments of the discussants on these three papers at the end of the section.

The last part of the volume presents the summaries of plenary papers, detailed syntheses of parallel session discussions, a list of overarching themes and research issues common to all the parallel discussions, and policy priorities emerging from the deliberations of the conference. The fundamental point that emerged from the debates was the goal of protecting the environment. It was felt that the "policymakers should integrate environmental goals with growth and poverty alleviation objectives by designing policies that respond to environmental concerns and cater to the needs of the rural households. Sustainable agricultural production can only be achieved if policymakers' and rural households' objectives and methods for meeting these objectives are compatible."