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Articles should have a maximum length of 10 folio pages (including tables, graphs, etc.), typed in double spacing. Contributions, in the language preferred by the writer, should be submitted in triplicate to the Editor, c/o Department of Agricultural Economics and Marketing, Pretoria, and should reach him at least one month prior to date of publication.

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Contents

I.	EDITORIAL	<u>Page</u> 1
II.	ECONOMIC TENDENCIES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURE ...	2
III.	ARTICLES	
	1. Decentralization of activities	4
	P.S. Rautenbach, Planning advisor to the Prime Minister	
	2. Principles of rural development	10
	P.C. Fourie, Chairman, Planning and Development Advisor Board of the Orange Free State, and D.J.G. Smith, Director, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Orange Free State	
	3. Social and demographic characteristics of rural areas	14
	S.P. Cilliers, Professor in Sociology, University of Stellenbosch	
	4. The organisational structure for the planning of national and sub-national development	24
	C.J. Viljoen, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Pretoria	
	5. Features of the economic growth and development of rural areas ...	27
	H.A. Kotzé, Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of the Orange Free State	
	6. Service areas and rural development	40
	P.J.D. du Toit, Senior Lecturer, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of the Orange Free State	
	7. Farm management - a prerequisite for sound agricultural development	54
	H.S. Hattingh, Assistant Chief, Division of Agricultural Production Economics	
IV.	STATISTICS	60

Principles of Rural Development

by

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Rural development must be viewed as a concept involving the development of resources mainly on behalf of the local inhabitants. We must submit, however, that a rural area is part of a larger political, social and economic entity and that rural development must be viewed as an important component of national development in which the various areas in their distinctive ways contribute to the national development objectives. "National policy and regional action are complementary - the one is of no use without the other".¹⁾

To avoid subsequent misunderstanding clarity must be found as to the objectives of this paper. Under "principles of rural development" we are concerned with the fundamental conditions which are necessary to bring about and promote rural development. Thus it is not a prescription which is involved, but rather the broader concepts. Only after these have been established and certain omissions supplemented by the subsequent speakers, can we try to find prescriptions.

From the outset it must be stated that when the principles of rural development are being considered, these do not merely involve agricultural activities. On the contrary, the concept involves far more. Along with the farmers and their farms there are also the other components which constitute such a rural community. Just as the rural community cannot be detached from the national community, similarly the agricultural community cannot be detached from the rural community in its totality. The care of orderly rural development specifically lies in the consideration of all the components in their integrated relationships.

This immediately identifies the first basic principle, namely that of a multi-dimensional approach to rural development. The development of the agricultural industry as such constitutes only a component of the whole although it is often viewed as the sole aspect of rural development. The interdependence between this industry and the other components of the community must be fully taken into account to avoid imbalance in development. Just as the local school is an important institution for the farmer, so the farmer and his family are of fundamental importance for the presence of the school. This applies equally to the trader, doctor and the attorney. Thus not only material welfare is involved, but amongst others also the cultural, social, educational and other spiritual aspects which concern the community, for both White and non-White. Certain intangible values thus come to the fore which are of particular importance in sound rural development. Although these values cannot always be measured they must deliberately be taken into account on a continuous basis.

Now it is clear that the fundamental objective for rural development involves the ensurance of a worthy existence for all the members of the community, both materially and spiritually. First-rate rural development requires that there will be a balance between the material and spiritual welfare of the community. It must always be remembered that economic regression could cause spiritual impoverishment. The sphere of influence of such a process is however not confined solely to the local community, particularly when such a process is allowed to take place on an extensive scale in rural areas. The basic functions of agriculture as such in the South African economic structure is known to everyone and does not require further elaboration. The entry of capable persons from the rural areas into other sectors, is however, one of the functions which

1) Friedman, J., and Alonso, W, Regional Development and Planning, Cambridge, 1965, p.4

has to be taken into account here. It required financial and spiritual effort to provide the doctor, advocate, minister or economist who gives service to those other sectors. One can thus refer to the outflow of human capital and in this respect the agricultural areas viewed along with other functions contributed in considerable measure to the general economic development of the country. Sound rural development is thus one of the prerequisites for general economic progress. This development revealed itself even from the time of the Industrial Revolution. As Kenneth E. Boulding puts it : "It is the turnip not the spinning jenny, which was the father of the industrial society". Today this still applies in South Africa and in a well-ordered national community this could continue to the advantage of everyone.

We will now consider another principle involved in rural development. This involves the fostering and maintenance of a development motive in the community. Such a motive serves as a catalyst to integrate the energy to work, ingenuity, initiative and perseverance of community organizers to promote the material and spiritual welfare. This incurs firstly an outlook on life which calls for joint responsibility for community development as a qualification for good citizenship. Justly it may be asked in the words of F.O. Sargent: "Is rural development a desire of rural residents or of professional planners?" Secondly this incurs a right to dispose over man-power of which the value and quality is such that it may be termed the most important developing factor. Thirdly it also accentuates the fact that it is insufficient to take for granted that quarters from outside the community should take an interest in the weal and woe of such an area and its people; and here particular reference is made to state assistance and assistance from other public institutions. Is it then unreasonable to expect or obtain for a certain achievement a counter achievement? The members of the rural community must themselves take part in the development of that which is their own and thus demonstrate an awareness for a vocation.

A rural community which does not prove that it is prepared to help itself has no moral right to ask for outside help and support. No one can develop a community merely from outside since actual development must always come from the inside, that is, it must be development of the community by the community. The implementation of the development programs rests on the actions of local communities which combine help and guidance from outside with organised local efforts thereby stimulating local initiative and leadership as the most important means in developing the particular community. This places great responsibility on the formal and informal leaders of the rural communities. From them it is expected to motivate and persuade members of their communities to act positively and to keep pace purposefully with changing circumstances and especially to remove opposition to

adaptation. These leaders will only succeed if they themselves set an example in practice in an efficient manner. This means that the process of self-examination to attain self-improvement must be maintained - in fact, this is the cheapest, most practical and most rewarding manner for greater success and the solution of problems.

Many a time the question has arisen as to why periodic socio-economic evaluations of a specific rural area are really necessary. This we actually consider as one of the basic principles of rural development and will forthwith endeavour to give the reasons. "The point to start from is study not action - for intelligent action can come only after long, arduous and systematic study, which embraces all levels of local society in one unified effort for the common welfare"²). Once again it must be clearly stated that such an evaluation does not cover merely a survey of the farms in the area, but includes all facets of the economic and social life of the area. This includes *inter alia* an analysis of the demography of the area and the economic structure (primary, secondary and tertiary) macro as well as micro. With these surveys on development, limitations are not only uncovered but lines for future development within the local and national context are also indicated. Thus it would be found that certain areas are progressing rapidly, others slowly, while others have grown negatively. Identification of these factors and through making them known to the community concerned and other interested parties, is very essential for balanced development because this ensures meaningful planning; in other words the mere exposure of comprehensive development problems can result in all-embracing corrective measures. Fragmentary evaluations on the other hand merely result in corrective measures of a patchwork nature which do not mean much. This again stresses the need for a multi-dimensional approach which requires inter-disciplinary research. From this it is clear that rural development does not rest solely with the agricultural scientist, but that he is a member of a team in the thinking and action on development and as such one of the important links in the chain.

Such studies will provide a clear picture of the future development pattern for certain areas. For other areas no future development patterns may be proved except that, that which is given must be utilised at best. We must stress that maintenance is also one of the factors of

2) Firmin Onl s, Economic Planning and Democracy, London, 1966, p. 81.

development particularly for certain rural areas; that extensification could also mean positive development.

In this manner a firm foundation has been laid for quantitative and qualitative evaluation of certain situations in an area. It is accepted as a sine qua non that changes and development in any rural area cannot take place in isolation. Changes at the national level frequently result in drastic effects on certain rural areas. Such changes can have a disruptive action on these areas and demand drastic measures of adaptation. Only when one possesses knowledge of the factors which influence the socio-economic structure of an area will it be possible to have these adaptations take place in a positive manner. It cannot be reasoned away that in this process of adaptation the rural occupants desire to figure in a more tangible and manifest manner in the general economic development of the country. It is the duty of the rural planner and the local community to be partners along with the authorities (State or others) to bring about this development in a responsible manner on the understanding that it takes place in accordance with the potential provided by physical, economic and human factors.

This finally brings us to the basic thought of not only rural development but also development in its totality. Development only becomes meaningful when we consider human development at all levels. "Progress springs mainly from people, their development and conservation underlies everything else".³⁾ The true core of development rests in the development of people who are always prepared to accept the responsibility of leadership. The greatest potential for development of rural areas is undoubtedly centred in the promotion of the standard of all community activities. This point of view places the emphasis on human development as a necessary condition for the future welfare of the local community. It is necessary to endeavour to develop the human resources, White as well as non-White, to the utmost through a purposeful and organised program. The members of the rural communities must be prepared to invest much more than before in self-development.

In this respect the local leaders must again bear special responsibilities. It is their duty always to be acquainted with national policy, the short- and long-term objectives of the development programs of the central authority and its practical significance for the development of the areas.

All this brings us to another very important principle for rural development, namely efficient communications. This refers in particular to communication from the rural community to the institutions of higher authorities and vice versa. If the local community (not merely the local leaders) is educated and properly informed, there will be a better insight and understanding of the bases which underline the policy of the authorities and the requirements to be met in execution thereof. Furthermore it is also essential that the institutions of the authorities concerned are kept informed regarding the local needs, problems and possibilities of development. This reaffirms that research is essential. In every community there are already various organised groups or institutions which can make a significant contribution to the promotion of effective communication with the authorities.

An analysis of the minutes of the meetings and reports of the first-mentioned groups sometimes creates the impression that these documents are nothing more than an inventory of unreasoned complaints and agitations. This can be prevented by evaluating systematically all the activities of the rural community. Such analyses will at the same time better equip the authorities to assess the prevailing local circumstances and where necessary and if possible to make suitable adjustments. For the authorities it is of utmost importance to obtain in good time the facts which have been properly analysed to be able to plan efficiently for development. As stated previously the continuous procurement, analyses and submission of these data are one of the basic requirements for orderly development. The transmission of this information places a big task on the local community and its leaders. Only by accepting this responsibility can the inhabitants of an area expect that others will be interested in their development. This requirement emphasises once again the urgency of self development and the acceptance of collective responsibility for rural development by the local community.

It is, however, not merely essential that communication between the local groups and the authorities be maintained; it is equally important that the authorities find means to keep in contact with local groups in a co-ordinated manner.

This definitely requires a regional approach in the formulation of policy. Local needs and problems of development are inevitably regionally bound. The development policies of the authorities can only be meaningful if these are undertaken in this manner. An approach which recognises regional distinctiveness will improve the effectiveness of communication from higher authorities and at the same time have a stimulating effect on the active participation of the local inhabitants.

3) Firmin Onlès. op. cit.

Important changes are taking place in the rural areas and these changes create problems of adaptation which penetrate to the core of the survival of these areas. Only planned adaptations can lead to orderly development of these areas and the elimination of disrupting influences which retard the process of adaptation. The planning must however be of a comprehensive nature and must include all the activities of the rural area.

Finally it is perfectly clear that our rural areas would have to accept our cities and larger towns as their hinterlands. The assumption that the city holds threats for a rural area should now only be the attitude of the ignorant. Urban and rural areas stand in a complementary relationship and do not necessarily reflect con-

flicting interests. First-rate human development makes it essential that the inhabitants of the cities and the rural areas should influence each other spiritually in a positive manner. Only the acceptance of the interdependence of interests on a wide basis can lead to a sound rural development and accordingly to general development.

In the present time it is essential that our rural areas be recognised as one of our largest national assets. This recognition can only find expression in the creation of organizational machinery which will ensure that the changes and consequent adaptations which are taking place in these regions and will still take place, will be brought about systematically.