STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT, SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN SSA:

Some Reflections

By Reginald Herbold Green

> The small boy who breaks a pot goes to tell
> his mother 'It got broken', not 'I broke the pot'
> but 'it got broken'... And who did this?
> We did. We broke the pot.
>
> - Jerry John Rawlings
> Head of State, Ghana

> Agriculture has performed poorly in Sub-Saharan Africa with average growth considerably lower than population growth, and low in comparison to other developing countries. ... Food security in SSA has deteriorated since independence. ... Chronic food insecurity is the primary manifestation of ... increasing poverty ... the inability of the poor to either produce or to buy adequate food.
>
> - Kevin Cleaver, World Bank

> Three problems that will dominate development thinking in the 1990s are already identifiable ... employment ... food production ... environmental resource protection.
>
> - Robert Paarlberg and
> Michael Lipton

An Overview: Decline, Disagreement and Divergence

Sub-Saharan Africa fared ill in terms of GDP in the late 1960s and early 1970s, well over 1976-79, abysmally over 1980-85 and erratically and unevenly - but on balance not much better - over 1986-90. The agricultural record was rather worse until the 1980s and the improvement in export/industrial crop production over the past decade has been wiped out in value by terms of trade shifts. Food production *per capita* has declined secularly - albeit with numerous national exceptions - since the mid-1960s and industrial/export crop volume at Sub-Continental level actually fell in the 1970s before recovering to quite slow growth in the 1980s.

In the 1980s, a series of parallel declines were common. Rural physical infrastructure - rarely ever even minimally adequate - crumbled in the face of non-maintenance and war. So did rural commercial infrastructure - private as well as public. With few exceptions, the moderate to draconic declines in provision of basic human or human investment services (adult and primary education, primary and mother/child health care, water) were disproportionately higher in rural areas which were already much less well served. Agricultural research and extension measured by quantities of personnel and even deflated expenditure rose but their actual value/quality declined in most cases. Food security weakened for rural drought and war victims and for vulnerable urban groups as rural surpluses for urban provisioning declined. Rural real (self-provisioning plus cash) household incomes fell, albeit except in the war ravaged rural areas - usually by proportionately less than in urban areas (and by proportionately less for food crop than for industrial/export crop sellers). Growing poverty and growing population interacted to increase the scope and rate of regress of environmental degradation which in turn locked more households into deeper poverty and - on balance - increased both rural exodus (usually to urban poverty) and rural populations. By 1990 the World Bank[1] found SSA displacing South and Southeast Asia as the 'leader' in the proportion of households in absolute poverty stakes.

World Bank Structural Adjustment strategies have sought to overcome this deeply unsatisfactory record. Unlike IMF Stabilisation[2] they have focused on real (physical quantity) output (supply) expansion to be achieved over the medium term. Their prime ideological/analytical construct has been reallocation of resources more efficiently in terms of unit output to input ratios. By and large more total resource use (via Consultative Group mobilisation first, later complemented by restored growth) has been their motto at least from 1984/85 onward with agricultural output and agriculturalist incomes seen as gainers from both processes.

But the SA approach has been very much price and market centred with rather limited attention to complementary factors (whose existence and importance have not been denied so much as set aside at least until 1989/90[3]). Given the physical infrastructural, structural, research and development and technological constraints, this is arguably a far too narrow approach even on the basis of Bank staff computed relative responsiveness of output to price and non-price measures.[4]

1980's agricultural results have, at the best, remained inadequate. Given that Structural Adjustment has been a major strategic theme both externally and (whether by parallel thinking, persuasion and/or the necessity of bowing to donor/lender preferences to secure finance and foreign exchange) internally, that is quite enough to say that SA - in its own terms - is not succeeding. Sustainable growth either in terms of per capita rises and lessened dependence on external transfers is not happening in most of SSA. Even where the first is present it is often underwritten by external transfers to cover external imbalance gaps which - even on Bank projections[5] - show no signs whatsoever of narrowing in the 1990s.

Like the Human Dimension critique of UNICEF[6] and of the Khartoum Conference[7], this argument does not require demonstrating that results would have been better without SA. In most cases in which SA has been attempted, the reverse is more plausible. But no strategy presiding over growing absolute poverty and food insecurity plus declining agricultural output per capita and falling average real rural household incomes can claim to be working acceptably even though certain other approaches might well do worse.

The more relevant question - unless one truly believes that unplanned, unsystematic, omnipresent price distortions (whatever their historic origins) are a good thing - is: What else is needed in a coherent, potentially viable agricultural strategy? Some fairly obvious contenders are: effective access to seeds and tools; improvement of physical and commercial infrastructure; restructuring research and extension to provide more relevant inputs (especially of tested, adopted knowledge) more effectively; extended access to basic human/human investment services; food security especially in respect to household self-provisioning (so-called "subsistence"); environment protection and rehabilitation (with special attention to shrubs - bushes - trees, fuel and simple building materials, agro-forestry and water use); pastoralism and mixed farming (including micro and national level land allocation). Three perhaps less evident ones are women's workload (often the binding constraint on output); rural self-organisation (operational co-ops and policy influencing associations); improved data (including actual household income, expenditure and time use budgets - budgets because most rural households do not have single but gender segmented budgets for each) so that there can be better monitoring of trends and ascertaining of levels. A more disputed element - at least in the "freehold registered title" form usually proposed - is land tenure reform.[8]

A Record of Mixed Failure and Survival

To review the SSA agricultural record since 1980 or 1965 would be tediously lengthy and perhaps not much to the point since the macro regional and country data, for what they are worth, are readily accessible.[9]

What may be of more interest are three different points which in no way refute the generally deeply unsatisfactory picture and trends but do cast some doubts on the direct applicability of generalisations to policy and may suggest ways forward. These are shaky data, uneven results and mass survival.

First, the data are almost incredibly bad. For some countries agricultural output growth trend estimates range from 2% to 3.5% and those for population from 2.75% to 3.5% a year. Evidently the difference between +0.75% and -1.5% per capita trends is not insignificant. At household level the budgetary (sources, uses, inputs - of cash, food, shelter and time) data are virtually non-existent in forms relevant to articulated agricultural policy and programming. Fairly simple techniques like crop cutting samples linked to satellite photo analysis or district by district small sample surveys of households (on a quick and nasty basis) are not being done, while far less evidently priority statistical exercises gobble up personnel, finance and foreign exchange.

Second, results are uneven. A substantial number of countries do have food production growth above that of population over 1985-90. Excluding war ravaged countries, these probably encompass a majority of Africans. In several years substantial nominally exportable grain surpluses have existed in several countries with triangular food aid finance and transport the main barriers to export. An overlapping - but not identical - group of countries have export and industrial crop volume growth rates of 3% or above. None of this really offsets the fact that to achieve reasonable physical access to food security with modest reductions in food aid SSA needs a 4% annual output trend to 2010 and even if the historic 2% trend is understated, keyed to inflated estimates of population growth or has changed, the highest likely average trend estimate is 2.5%. But the divergences - and the divergences in, inter alia, peasant political power, infrastructural adequacy, rural services trends and research/extension effectiveness which seem relevant in several of the cases suggest not only that "getting the prices right" is not enough (now - unlike 1981 - rarely contested) but also some of the items to explore in seeking an "enough" package.

The third point is that most rural Africans have survived and have survived on the base of their agricultural (crops - livestock - forestry - fishing) production. Indeed the most drastic average falls in living standards have been for urban areas at least so far as nutrition and household incomes go. The exceptions are: rural populations ravaged by war; drought victims forced by the lateness of support programmes to flee from their homes and livelihoods (and very rarely given effective support to re-establish them); households from seriously over-populated and/or ecologically damaged areas. It is not accidental that many of these people flee to towns - a push not a pull - where they make up the least able to survive (and the least provided with public services) urban groups and tend to create a false labour market below the minimum "efficiency wage" or its productivity analogue in the "informal" employment/self-employment sector. These groups are not victims of agricultural policy as such but of insecurity, faulty and tardy response to disasters and either technological stagnation or inadequate opportunities for rural - rural migration. The long term survival support, macroeconomic distortion (inefficiently low[10] urban remuneration of labour) and sluggish agricultural output growth costs as well as in human misery terms are very large. Evidently they vary rarely relate to agricultural pricing.

But, as noted, most agricultural households have survived in agriculture. When their nutritional status has worsened secularly - by no means always the case - this often seems to relate to the decline in non-crop cash income (surprisingly high - frequently 25% nationally and in areas with substantial remittances sometimes over 50%) forcing additional food sales out of barely adequate food production to meet cash necessities (salt, tools, clothes, fees, transport, etc.). The Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana are among the clearest examples of this malaise which may be more readily tackled by restoring non-crop incomes than by crop price or market changes (especially since Ghanaian food crop marketing is private and - very imperfect - market, not official price or state agency, dominated.)

The SSA food deficit is basically urban and results from very large rises in the per cent of urban population combined with low rates of growth of average output per rural household which have not generated adequate increases in marketed output. The mechanics are simple: if 95% of households basically grow and 5% buy food a 6% surplus above self-provisioning by growers balances the market but if the ratio shifts to 75% to 25% then a 33% surplus (a 25% output growth per producing household) is needed. That shift is not atypical of 1960-1990 demographic structure adjustment in much of SSA. On the very shaky evidence output per peasant household has - on average - grown secularly but not fast enough. It should be noted that this pattern is in general as true of countries with no official grower prices or single channel marketing as of these with. The exceptional cases of secular food surpluses in non-drought years also occur on both sides of that divide.

Structural Adjustment: Price, Market and Macro Policy Conditionality

Structural adjustment programming as perceived by the World Bank begins with macroeconomic policy reform because it believes that a bad macro policy context leads to sectoral policy and project failure - a disabling context. That argument while pseudo empirical (SSA did grow slowly in the early 1970s and the 1980s compared to the 1955-65 period - or to 1976-79 - and to other developing and other low income regions) was basically intellectual and political. This is not to deny that in some cases it was correct. Agricultural project lending had a high failure rate in SSA - albeit on a per cent of investment basis not in other regions - but many of the reasons were project or related project specific, not macro policy framework derivatives.

The same reasons - plus the relative ease of setting and monitoring conditions - led to emphasis on price changes (e.g. exchange rates, real interest rates) and on reducing direct bureaucratic and regulatory and indirect state enterprise involvement with market management (or massaging or interference depending on viewpoint). These measures were seen as likely to raise the relative prices of tradeables (including marketed food) and especially of exportables (including main export crops). The impact of reducing subsidies to agriculture (e.g. on tools, seed, fertiliser) early on was not seriously analysed even for surplus producing/selling farmers let alone for the majority who were basically self-provisioning and used non-crop cash incomes to finance household produced and consumed crop production.

Further, because Structural Adjustment Programmes were usually begun in demonstrably import starved and infrastructure deteriorating economies, most Bank lending tended to be for quick disbursing import support to keep the economy running and for infrastructural rehabilitation.

Sectoral programmes were often ones whose policy conditions were tied to the sector - e.g. agriculture - but whose import support was not either at the level of goods imported or government use of the local currency proceeds when these goods were sold. In fact project agricultural lending in SSA declined as a per cent both of total lending and of project lending.[11] Given the Bank's leadership role in mobilising external finance, bilateral grants/loans followed that pattern rather than offsetting it.

The concentration on prices - and official prices at that - meant that SAP policy basically effected (or could be expected to effect positively) the commercialised portion of production and within it export and domestic industrial input crops for which official prices and marketing was both more general and harder or more costly to by-pass.

In fact taking SSA as a whole it is probable that only about 40% of agricultural output falls in those classes (20% export/domestic industrial, 20% marketed food, 60% household self-provisioning food). And of that 40% probably half either was not covered by official channels and prices even on paper or had effectively by-passed them.

As a result, it seems likely that only 20-25% of SSA agriculture was significantly affected by relative price shifts resulting from SAP's and their nationally designed analogues and probably under 10% of total food production. Clearly the generality of the macro-sectoral pricing changes as instruments to alter resource allocations and production trends was much less than was - or even now is - recognised.

The empirical evidence on price elasticities sometimes used to justify this strategic approach was at best shaky. Much of it was single crop, two variable (real crop price/marketed output) based. That is no proxy for an overall agricultural output/price elasticity even assuming there were no non-price constraints on supply response to price. In fact most overall elasticities have proven to be low and - according to an IMF study[12] - statistically insignificant. A Bank study suggests that official pricing policy differences explain about a tenth of variation in agricultural output trends among SSA countries.[13] As the elasticities are positive this is not an argument against repricing - especially via devaluation impact in respect to export crops - but a warning that dealing with one-tenth of a problem's causation is unlikely to be adequate as a main strategic approach to solving it.

To be at all balanced it is necessary to underline that in principle the Bank has always held that Structural Adjustment for agriculture had to go beyond price shifts and market freeing. Even in the initial 1981 Accelerated Development report[14] a host of complementary measures are listed. But with few exceptions these have not been key components of Policy Framework Papers, of strategic conceptualization and elaboration or of major resource allocations.

More recently there have been major shifts at least at analytical level in the Long Term Perspective Study, in the 1990 World Development Report with its focus on absolute poverty and in the forthcoming Population-Agriculture-Environment study for SSA.[15] These do focus on absolute poverty reduction, food security, decent livelihoods - a return to President McNamara's 1970s crusade against absolute poverty as LTPS, explicitly recognises. In part this shift comes because the most blatant price distortions and marketing muddles have been tackled with substantial (if very uneven) success. In part it represents the growing intellectual and political concerns about poverty, hunger and the environment. And in part it illustrates that the World Bank does draw on the lessons of experience - not excluding its own mistakes or inadequacies even if it is somewhat "economical" as to explicitly saying so in public print.[16]

But these shifts to date have not informed policy, resource allocation or - a fortiori - staff development and disbursement levels. Therefore, the 1980s record of SA in SSA is basically the result (or non-result) of macroeconomic price and market freeing conditionalities and their implementation.

The Record Revisited

The last decade's agricultural growth over SSA as a whole is of the order of 2% to 2.5% with food about 2% and non-food probably somewhat higher. There are some significant divergences - Southern Africa appears to be performing better (especially if war torn Angola and Mozambique are excluded from the average). Indeed excluding war devastated states - Ethiopia/Eritrea, Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, Chad - it is possible that overall production and population are roughly parallel.[17] That is not comforting for three reasons. To reduce import requirements and achieve reasonable national levels of calorific availability would require a 4% annual growth trend for food to 2,010. To sustain import capacity and sustain/increase domestic inputs into manufacturing would require about a 6% annual trend for non-food products. For the war wracked economies significantly higher than average rates would be needed because of the poorer starting point.

The 1980s trend in food - albeit not in other crops - is not significantly better than that of the 1970s so there is little reason to believe a secular turning point has been passed. Further, most of the output increase has come from extensive use of land and from reduction of fallow periods - both probably unsustainable and potentially environmentally deadly under present techniques.[18]

That panorama does not suggest SA has greatly enhanced agricultural production trends. In the case of food there is no real evidence adjusters have done better than non-adjusters. For export production there is evidence but not, to date, of sustained or rapid growth above old peak levels.

Agricultural investment has fallen as a share of total SSA investment, of Bank lending and of ODA.[19] While it is true that supporting fixed investment needed by agriculture may in fact be largely infrastructural and service provision[20], there is no evidence of any such shift within rural investment rather than an absolute and relative decline.

The 1970s fashion for "integrated rural development" has been dropped on the grounds that it was too complex to work well and rarely produced rapid increases in output. That does not resolve the problem it was intended to overcome - parallel provision of complementary infrastructure, basic services and applicable agricultural technology/inputs. The complexity problem appears to have arisen from creating "parallel government" units for IRDPs rather than coordinating parallel sectoral activity within existing state institutions. The disappointing output results often appear to flow from the absence of any plausible agricultural care in IRDPs[21] - an error perhaps easier to see in retrospect than at the time.

Policy interventions have focused on prices and institutions - with much less physical programming than in the late 1960s or 1970s - with very mixed results. In Tanzania, for example, the Marketing Development Bureau's price advice created huge deficits on domestic food crops and radical disincentives for export crop production, while its oversight of agricultural marketing bodies was paralleled not only by a wholesale collapse from modest surpluses taking one year with another to catastrophic losses and an even more stunning collapse of ability to keep, use or produce accounts. Admittedly an extreme example of Bank-led initiatives into increasing national agricultural policy and monitoring capacity, MDB was hardly unique in kind.

In the 1980s both Bank and most SSA national research, technical policy appraised and programme/project evaluation capacity in agriculture has declined. There are less high level personnel, working less effectively with poorer data and with research/extension systems which (including donor funding) have rising numbers of staff and of real spending but apparently falling real outputs.[22]

The issue is not whether Structural Adjustment caused this record, nor even whether it would have been marginally worse without it. If Structural Adjustment is held out as a package for regaining sustainable growth and is used as the main catalyst for mobilising and allocating external resources - as it is in half of SSA - then it has an obligation to address food and overall agricultural production problematics more effectively than it has to date.

To say this is not to argue that clear-cut alternatives have to date been conceptualised or articulated for SSA as a whole or in most countries. ECA's <u>African Alternatives</u> (like its intellectual predecessor <u>The Lagos</u>

Plan of Action) is very short of programmes and policies for the rural sector beyond throwing money at agricultural investment (unspecified).[23] The Bank's LTPS[24] has a coherent conceptual check-list and some strategic linking but also remains far from articulation and clearly spelled out priorities and paths. The forthcoming Bank sectoral study may make several breakthroughs in this respect.[25]

Toward An Agenda: Some Themes and Linkages

Reviewing the record and what Structural Adjustment has not stressed may at least provide an agenda for conceptualisation, prioritisation and articulation. What can be said briefly or for SSA as a whole tends to be general and at several removes from operationality. Price formulae and guide-lines may be applicable across crops, livestock, ecological zones and infrastructural bases (even if they do not produce as clear and correct results without local adaptation as some proponents have supposed) but for most other elements the degree of diversity and down to earth formulation needed for positive results is much greater.[26]

The broad goal is to enable farmers to produce more for household self-provisioning and for sale. Given that perhaps 75% of production is by small family farmers, of that perhaps 70% is consumed in the producing household and that small farming households dominate both rural and national population and households in absolute poverty, production by poor people needs to be stressed for output as well as distribution (and socio-political) reasons.

For farmers to produce more they require better access to inputs - e.g. seeds, tools, seedlings, breeding stock, fertiliser, in some cases implements and chemicals. They are frequently not available and action to ensure that they are (whether via public or private channels) deserves more attention than it usually receives.

A parallel input need is knowledge. African long rotation systems are increasingly no longer viable because of rising household/land ratios and the push outward into marginal (in quality and/or rainfall security) areas poses problems many farmers find difficult to master. In the long term this requires prioritised, targeted research (now perhaps beginning, e.g. in Zimbabwe, Botswana, SADCC Agricultural and Livestock Research Programme, the International Centre for Inset Pathology and Environment) but that will take up to a decade to provide proven, adapted new knowledge. What may be possible faster is identifying best used "peasant" techniques, testing for ecological limits and - via retrained, more flexible extension services - broadening their use.

Markets frequently need improvement - both in access to buyers and to goods to buy. Because most businessmen satisfice (rather than maximise) and because rural business is harder and riskier enabling market improvement may require state action beyond improving infrastructure. Targeted lending and training for rural based entrepreneurs (not least co-ops) and - when imports/domestic manufactures - are objectively scarce in rural areas improving their access to (allocations from) importers, manufacturers, wholesalers deserve scrutiny (even if not unqualified or unexamined adoption).

Rural infrastructure and rural basic service provision both require rehabilitation and/or expansion. Both are directly (currently) as well as indirectly (a decade ahead) productive. Bad roads - bridges - etc., deter traders and worsen rural real purchasing power. Lack of warehouses raises wastage. Sick persons and those tending them are not productive. Adult education and extension (properly viewed a form of adult education) have fast pay-off. Accessible pure water could often increase the time women have available for agricultural activity by up to a third.

Environmental protection matters to poor farmers who are forced by need to degrade their and their children's future livelihoods to survive now. Two key questions are knowledge of how (technically and economically) to move from long rotation (so-called "shifting cultivation") to short rotation systems without damaging the land and how to manage poorer soils and more variable climates to avoid neo-desertification and erosion. Some knowledge exists and should be extended (e.g. more intensive grazing with more frequent rotation to improve pasture, break up packed soil, reduce erosion); some could be adopted from other areas. But the main breakthroughs remain to be made; will largely need to be national and regional; and should be identified by 1995 as 1995-2010 research priorities.

However, in respect to trees-bushes-shrubs, rather more is known about how to enable rural households to reintroduce them and to avoid degradation damaging to soil (e.g. erosion), diet (lack of fuel and tree food products), women's workload (time to get fuel), shelter (e.g. poles and thatch) and incomes (from food, fodder, fuel and building material sales). What seem to be lacking are systematic national programmes designed with proposed beneficiary participation from the design stage and backed by significant resource allocations.

Governance has, oddly given its current fashionability, rarely been incorporated into agricultural sector proposals. Two aspects deserve priority - but case by case - attention: farmer joint operations (e.g. co-ops in marketing, transport and - less often - production) and effective farmer presentation of agendas (e.g farmers organisations making specific proposals to all levels of government and both regularly and publicly monitoring performance as they see it). The key to both is farmer - not expert manager nor technocrat nor politician - control. What is often most needed is "space to breathe" but, especially for co-ops, access to credit, goods and specific training may often be crucial as well.

Gender issues have reached the rhetorical and aspiration agenda and - on occasion - micro implementation. Strategic conceptualisation, articulation and integration into overall sectoral strategy largely remain to be accomplished.

The key facts are that up to two-thirds of person days devoted to crop production are female and that most rural African women suffer from 14 to 16 hour workloads, at least during peak crop labour demand periods. To increase output more rapidly requires enabling women to increase their productivity. How is less clear-cut. Better access to health facilities and more preventative medicine (women tend the sick), provision of access to water (women and girls fetch it), tree-shrub-bush protection and regeneration (women collect fuel) may often afford faster, surer gains than crop production technology changes. Food processing and storage sometimes offer comparable "easy" gains. However, input access also hinders women's productivity especially where they produce primarily food for household provisioning and have low cash incomes.

That leads to a related area - studying household time, income (cash or kind) and expenditure (cash or kind) budgets which are rarely unified except in female-headed households. Lack of knowledge on these budgets makes projection of policy impact on overall output shaky and on household nutrition virtually impossible.[27]

For about 35 to 40 million rural Africans the first priority is peace followed by livelihood rehabilitation. War has destroyed their fields, homes, food security and assets. Peace, by itself, will not allow them to return home, clear their fields, rebuild their homes, plant their crops and tend their animals until food and income flow. Their need are inputs (to clear and to build as well as to plant and to till), livestock, transport, food until harvest, cash incomes (e.g. from public works to restore infrastructure), markets, services, infrastructure.

To date, few programmes for rural rehabilitation have been devised or implemented. Donors tend to fund survival calamity relief on the one hand and longer term development support on the other - post crisis livelihood rehabilitation is lost in between. National priority setting often (not always - e.g Mozambique) suffers from the same blind spot.

If the foregoing agenda is to be acted on, a series of operational implications follow. First, broad access, low user cost programmes (largely on what are normally styled "Recurrent Budget" heads) not limited access, high user (or employee) cost, projects are the only feasible central instruments.

Second, agricultural strategy needs to be coordinated with - inter alia - infrastructural and basic service strategy and that coordination (not institutional integration) can be productive only if carried through to field operational, monitoring and review levels.

Third, governments need to be more selective in what they do, concentrating on what no one else can provide (e.g. prioritised, targeted research and extension; sectoral and household knowledge collection and analysis; infrastructure; basic services; rehabilitation). In other activities - e.g. marketing and, especially, production - they should place more stress on enabling farmers, co-ops and enterprises to do more.

For the Bank, and donors generally, this agenda would require a re-ordering of priorities in terms of finance (urban - rural, intra-rural and project vs general support), of personnel and of approach to the sector. Even more crucial, it would require moving away from multiple, parallel interventions which make any national strategy hard to formulate and impossible to implement. In the 1980s technical assistance and donor support have become so pervasive, dominant and fragmented in many SSA countries as to become a major forced decapacitating national agricultural policy, programming, monitoring and accountability.

This agenda does not include creating enabling macroeconomic frameworks - not least adopting and maintaining realistic exchange rates and pro-rural (or neutral) tax policies. This is largely because they are already on most government's agendas and a good deal has been done. Privatisation is not listed because private/public sector issues are, perhaps, more effectively considered in national contexts and in the contexts of the issues already listed than in somewhat unreal contrasting of bureaucratic planning and perfect markets. Certainly the scope of many public institutions' activities - and their costs - can and should be cut. Ghana's Cocoa Marketing Board is an ongoing (if to date partial) success story. But ill-planned privatisation - e.g. from Crop Authorities to Co-ops outside both state and farmer control in Tanzania - is unlikely to be very productive.

Similarly, the priorities suggested cut against new large scale agricultural enterprises (public or private) as the main way forward and - given a record of 50 years of failure - against heavy reliance on large scale irrigation schemes except as a by-product of power production or under quite special ecological conditions. They also - simply because state capacity is limited - suggest that closing down, peasantising or joint venturising many public sector production units may well be a good idea. However, the reasons are to free decision taking capacity, high level professionals and investment resources for the priority list, not any general hope that these adjustments would in more than a handful of special cases significantly alter agricultural sector growth rates or national food security by direct increases in output from the present enterprises.

In Summation

The SSA agricultural record since 1965 - in production growth, ecological sustainability, food security, export generation and domestic industrial input supply - is depressing (especially for most African farmers and food buyers - categories by no means so mutually exclusive as is sometimes supposed). The 1980-90 record is barely better than that of 1970-80 and the gains in growth trends appear to be entirely in export production. The record is uneven - some countries do have production growth trends at or above those of population. Most rural Africans have survived by producing and most of those who have not have been the victims of the interaction of war and drought.

Structural adjustment has not been able to reverse this record of downward (per capita) drift except in several cases in respect to exports. That is not good enough for an overall strategy. Even if the causes for the decline lies outside SA (as they usually do) a transformation to sustainable growth, food security, poverty reduction and ecological sustainability must achieve more than prevent further worsening of already deeply unsatisfactory performance.

An agenda of issues to enable African farmers to produce more and the state to prioritise its actions and resource allocations to creating an enabling context can be sketched. It is far broader than the macro or price policies which, in practice, have been at the core of 1980s Agricultural Sectoral Structural Adjustment. Infrastructure, basic services, knowledge creation, ecological protection from need and increasing women's ability to produce by reducing non-agricultural workload are central to it.

That agenda requires more detailed, context specific, African articulation than does pricing policy. It also requires a shift of resources to programmes enabling many farmers from projects employing or serving a few. That is in standard terms a shift from capital (bricks and mortar, often unwisely termed "Development") budgets to recurrent. And it is much more intensive in respect to knowledge, personnel and interaction with farmers (especially women farmers) than almost all present African national agricultural sector operations. Further, to operate on it requires that donors cease decapacitating national agricultural strategy and implementation by running fragmented, donor controlled agricultural policy, institution and/or project enclaves; but do not at the same time withdraw allocations of resources.

The difficulties which acting on these implications to implement this agenda would pose are daunting. However, the alternatives have over a quarter century produced very unsatisfactory results. Few of the items on the agenda are, in themselves, very controversial. They have, however, rarely been seen as central rather than peripheral nor viewed in relation to each other. With the increasing realisation that neither enclave projects, heavy handed bureaucratic adumbration of (largely by-passed) rules and channels nor tunnel vision concentration on prices meets the objective test of enabling farmers to produce 4% to 5% more a year, the interest in new agendas and on sectoral strategy and action transformation is growing.

To be facilely optimistic or to sell any new agenda as a cure all or style of the year would be foolish - SSA has suffered enough from both of these patterns. But to explore, to decide and to build cumulatively (with reviews and adjustments) is as necessary for African governments and agricultural professionals today as it has always been for African farmers.

Notes

1. See World Bank, World Development Report 1990

2. cf Green 1989, 1991

3. See Cleaver 1985, 1989; World Bank Long Term Perspectives Study, 1989

4. See Cleaver, 1989, Chhibber, 1988

5. See LTPS

6. See UNICEF, 1985 and 1988; UN ECA 1988; Green, 1988

7. cf Cleaver, 1989; LTPS

8. See data in LTPS and FAO, 1986 Tables

9. Efficiency wage is used here to denote a wage high enough to allow/cause full time, stable labour force with rising productivity

10. See Paarlberg and Lipton, 1990

11. ibid

12. Fund data cited in Cleaver, 1989

13. See Cleaver, 1989

14. See Bank, 1981

15. See LTPS, WDR 1990, Bank 1990b (mimeo draft)

16. See Green, 1989, 1991

17. See Note 8

18. The low %'s of arable land "in use" cited by FAO are meaningless unless land being fallowed is included as "in use". With long rotation this is rarely done so that 25% to 30% current cropping use may be unsustainably high not - as it would seem - quite low.

19. See Paarlberg and Lipton, 1990

20. For this reason calls for fixed %'s of investment in agriculture as such are not particularly useful.

21. See Daniel, Green, Lipton, 1985

22. See Paarlberg and Lipton, 1990

23. See UN ECA, 1989

24. See LTPS

25. World Bank, 1990b

26. One attraction of price focused analysis and prescription is that - unlike ecology, female-headed households, etc. - it can be written on generally to some point without detailed contextual knowledge.

27. Household Budgets and Food Security interlock - whether the food is self-provisioning income and expenditure or represents purchases out of cash incomes. Because most SSA household budgets are divided on gender lines as to income rights and expenditure obligations, it is women's household budgets which are most crucial in respect to food security and nutrition at household level.

Sources and Background

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