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TERRITORIAL POLICIES FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS

I. BACKGROUND

1. Efficiency, competitiveness, integration into international markets and economic stability have been some of the major challenges on the agendas of most Latin American countries in the last 20 years. The search for economic efficiency led most Latin American countries to embark on structural reforms to open up and streamline their markets. During the same period, the search for effectiveness in public management has increasingly directed most countries of the region towards political and administrative decentralization.
2. However, this search for competitive integration into markets seems to have been accompanied by an increase in already significant inequalities in the region: territorial inequalities from the concentration of growth and capital inflow to the more competitive areas; sectoral inequalities with competitiveness seemingly at odds with agricultural activity; and social inequalities as a result of the above and because of the growing importance of knowledge, education and technological advance.
3. These inequalities are largely associated with the fact that survival of the rural population of Latin America seems to be increasingly dependent on outmigration, which is no more than transferring the rural poor to urban areas within or outside the country, and on off-farm employment, which is only available to localities in better condition and better connected to the urban centres. Given these determining factors, any effort to break the existing dichotomies of Latin America requires public policies that address the rural sector with a multidisciplinary, coordinated and territorial approach; policies that are accessible to local communities and can thus galvanize their development.¹
4. Viewed in this context, agricultural systems are undergoing dynamic change.² First, the abandonment of the old models has produced substantial change in the agricultural sector and in its relations with other sectors of the economy and with society as a whole. Second, these changes

¹ These trends are expounded in Gordillo and Icaza (2005).

² For more details on this topic see Gordillo and Jiménez (2005).

underline, in different ways, the importance of institutions and the rules of the game in the performance of the agricultural and rural economy and policy. Third, these changes are reflected in a new interface between public and private, which calls for a profound reworking of public policy modalities.

5. These changes can be synthesized into major trends:
 - a. The most notable trend is towards an extended or broader agriculture that goes beyond primary production, that is increasingly linked with other economic agents and that is horizontally and vertically integrated. For this to happen, agriculture tends to be highly dependent on the supply of services, including marketing, rural finance and technical assistance.
 - b. Dietary habits have become more diversified and tended to be guided by quality considerations in response to the higher incomes of the better-off segments of the population, both in developed and developing countries, and by strong urbanization. Knowledge and human capital have therefore become strategic variables for agricultural and rural development.
 - c. Diversification of food intake has led to a reappraisal of the dietary practices of indigenous cultures and the increasingly important role of rural women.
 - d. Sustainability of the resulting model requires appropriate management of natural resources, expressed in policy instruments and validated technology matrices and in an incentive structure that recognizes the productive and social heterogeneity of the rural environment.
 - e. Increasingly apparent in this heterogeneity is the closer urban-rural linkage that is due to the new functions attributed to rural areas, among other factors. Important among these are the conservation of the environment and rural tourism which have driven the diversification of source of income of rural families and the consequently greater role played by off-farm income.
 - f. This need to promote sustainable agriculture is causing a shift from strictly sectoral policy to multisectoral policy that is increasingly territorial in focus, in an optic of reinvigorated rural development and with a reappraisal of the rural area as a fundamental component of the national economy and society, because of its significant multiplier effects.
 - g. An important element of this shift towards territorial policy is the political and administrative decentralization that is taking place in virtually all countries of the region, with more responsibilities transferred to local governments. This process of decentralization, which bring policies and programmes closer to the demands and needs of local communities, is not always accompanied by the required transfer of financial, technical and human resources, and capacities.
 - h. Equally important is the stronger role being played in production processes by the private sector, especially the supermarkets and distribution channels that determine private quality standards.³

6. In this context of liberalization and global change in agricultural systems, the search for greater competitiveness by rural production units and countries calls for more effective action to reduce the high levels of poverty and especially of extreme poverty, which is essentially rural.

³ Important in this context is the role played by the Good Agricultural Practices that are often stipulated by supermarket chains (EUREP GAP). GAPs define minimum acceptable standards that are used as a points of reference for better management practices and that aim to achieve specific objectives such as improving working conditions, guaranteeing safe and better quality products, promoting animal welfare and using technologies with minimum environmental impact. FAO RLC has been working on support and institutional strengthening for the promotion and implementation of GAPs, especially among the small producers of the region. See corresponding activities at <http://www.rlc.fao.org/prior/segalim/prodalim/prodveg/bpa/>

7. In 2004, 96 million people, i.e. 18.6% of the total population of Latin America, were living in extreme poverty, while the total number of poor (including those 96 million) were estimated at 222 million people, i.e. 42.9% of the total population of the region. Some 52 million people living in extreme poverty are in the urban areas and almost 45 million in the rural areas. The similarity of these figures in a region where approximately 75% of the total population live in urban areas is due to the greater incidence of extreme poverty in rural areas (37%) than in urban areas (13%).⁴

8. The continued existence of poverty in recent years is associated with low economic growth and with the fact that there has been no or even negative progress in narrowing income distribution in many countries. The five-year period 1998-2002 was one of negative or near-zero *per capita* GDP growth, with the exception of 2000, while most countries have experienced a deterioration in income distribution since 1997.⁵

9. Despite the efforts and large sums of money deployed by countries and international cooperation to combat rural poverty, there is growing dissatisfaction with the outcome among governments and societies as a whole. This has engendered a critical review of the many approaches and instruments employed in the last ten years to promote rural development and reduce poverty.

10. Among the approaches questioned and discussed is "Community Driven Development", which has had a strong influence on rural development projects in Latin America.⁶ The limitations of dissociating the social and economic aspects of life in the rural territories call for a more up-to-date "Regional Driven Development" approach that seeks to reconcile these two inseparable dimensions of life in the rural communities.

11. By circumscribing projects at community level, there has been a tendency to favour assistance-driven actions that are alienated from local and regional economic dynamics. Resources are used mainly to minimize the urgent needs of households living in poverty, rather than to spur structural change to give those households greater access to assets and thus entry into dynamic markets.

II. EMERGENCE OF THE TERRITORIAL DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT

12. The increasingly recognized limitations of traditional approaches to rural development have generated apparent consensus among academics and international agencies over the need to adopt a territorial approach for policies, programmes and projects aimed at overcoming poverty in rural areas.⁷

13. Given the multisectoral nature of development, emphasis should no longer be placed solely on the growth of agricultural production (although this is considered a link of the production chain) but also on tightening linkages between different players and social segments in order to stimulate innovation and integration into new markets and thus broaden the capacity of the marginalized segments of the population to generate income.

14. In this perspective, territories are no longer neutral collections of natural factors and human abilities that serve determine the location of businesses and workers, but entities moulded by informal ties and non-commercial interactions developed over time that shape distinct personalities. They are thus a source of identity for individuals and social groups.⁸

⁴ ECLAC, 2005. The Millennium Development Goals: a Latin American and Caribbean perspective. June 2005, Santiago de Chile.

⁵ See ECLAC (2005).

⁶ DeJanvry and Sadoulet (2004); Binswanger and Aiyar (2003).

⁷ Gordillo (1999); DeJanvry and Sadoulet (2002); Veiga (2002); Schejtman and Berdegué (2003); Abramovay (2003); IICA (2003); Veiga and *et. al* (2001).

⁸ For more detailed analysis of this topic, see Abramovay (2003).

15. As open systems, territories are constantly influenced by external pressures and in turn influence other territories. Global social, environmental, economic and political processes, regional changes and national adjustments impact on the dynamics and functioning of rural areas, including the most remote areas. The natural resources that support populations, markets and economic processes are changing, information is spreading more rapidly and institutional settings are losing stability. The processes of globalization are therefore affecting the positioning and redefining the role of "territory", "local spaces" and "proximity".⁹

16. When addressing development issues, consideration needs to be given to the uncertain and unpredictable interactions that occur between local and global players. Adopting the territory as point of reference and considering the new active role of civil society are key aspects in redefining the parameters of rural development and contrasting the negative impacts of these interactions.

17. Territorial development policies are therefore needed to create opportunities where markets cannot or will not establish them. In other words, public investment should be used to support the creation of dynamic markets that can stimulate and facilitate new production activities which include families living in poverty.¹⁰ Seen in this perspective, the main challenge of territorial development policies seems to be to create new opportunities for the generation of income with social inclusion, in other words, opportunities open to people living in poverty.¹¹

18. However, the apparent conceptual agreement over the importance of the territorial approach has not yet translated into an operational instrument or a set of good practices to guide the implementation of better public and private interventions for the promotion of development and the reduction of poverty. There are still very few evaluations of the results of these new institutional arrangements¹² at territorial level to combat rural poverty. The region is in fact in a period of intense trial and search for ways of putting the territorial approach to development into practice.

19. FAO for its part has been actively involved in this debate, both in Latin America and in other parts of the world. Besides promoting learning from experiences in the region, FAO has also been working on a proposed methodology platform referred to as Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development. If they are to be ecologically coherent, economically viable, socially just and human in dimension, interventions need to consider the asymmetries of power which are determined by unequal access to and control of resources and information and are characterized by dissimilar capacities.

III. PUBLIC-PRIVATE COORDINATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS: PUBLIC INTERVENTION

20. Although there has been insufficient empirical evaluation, the application of territorial approaches has revealed the existence of problems relating to: the supply of public goods and related externalities; the processes of political and administrative decentralization; the lack of coordination between public agencies and programmes; and the low participation of the private sector. All this focuses attention on the role of the State and on its modalities of intervention in the promotion and facilitation of development.

⁹ FAO SDA Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development, Rome 2005.

¹⁰ In order to expand their substantive freedoms, to cite Amartya Sen (2000).

¹¹ For Beduschi and Abramovay (2004) "... territorial policy is no longer a question of redistributing already existing resources and wealth, but rather of awakening potentials for the creation of new wealth, initiatives and coordination".

¹² By institutional arrangements we mean the various institutional vehicles, whether legally recognized or not, to group the different players present in the regions and territories, whose main objective is to coordinate efforts to promote development using strategies and approaches shared by those involved. These arrangements can take the form of councils, fora, trusts, etc.

21. The State undertakes countless interventions in the territories, both social and economic (social safety nets, production and infrastructure programmes, etc.), each with its own objectives and incentives that have a decisive influence on expectations, decision-making and the behaviour of economic agents and their organizations.

22. In general, the lack of coherence and complementarity of objective explains why public programme incentives are not directed towards common results, which significantly undermines their individual impact. The situation is further compounded if the incentives generated by public interventions have not been designed or are not applied with thought given to the socioeconomic rationality of the different agents involved.

23. A common occurrence in the region is for family units to be given access to the public transfer of income but not always to opportunities for economic activity. In other cases, they have access to better infrastructure but not to markets; or those with access to credit do not always have access to technical assistance, and vice versa. Also, public interventions frequently fail to contribute to the development of rural (or financial) markets, which means that the planned integration of economic units into markets for goods and/or services cannot be sustained over time.¹³

24. In a context of increasingly open markets, once consensus has been reached on the urgent need to bolster the market integration of broad segments of the rural population in order to enhance their capacity to generate income, public interventions must then be revised in an attempt to:

- a. Achieve better coordination between interventions with social objectives and those with economic objectives. The absence of such coordination can, for example, lead to the inability of social transfer programmes to encounter "outlets" for beneficiaries to undertake income-generation activities in a sustainable manner.
- b. Facilitate coordination and linkage between players and social sectors, which requires confidence built from processes of positive reciprocity and reputation that foster cooperation or collective action. The role of the State is to create enabling conditions for the building of confidence and to establish clear rules for the agreed design and implementation of territorial programmes and projects.
- c. Ensure that the incentives of individual public programmes serve to modify the way the target population adopts innovation, shares risk and seizes business opportunity; this through the influence of such incentives on the target population's processes of forming expectations and making decisions, and on its behaviour in general.
- d. Ensure a greater alignment of incentives among an increasing number of public programmes in the territories, in order to achieve significant impact on improving families' living conditions.

IV. EXPERIENCES OF A REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE PROMOTED BY THE FAO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

25. In response to the need to actually apply the conceptual progress of the territorial approach to development, the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean is developing an initiative to implement this in selected territories of Mexico, Brazil and Chile.

26. This initiative involves support, analysis and evaluation of experiences in designing institutional arrangements for the promotion of development in five territories of Mexico, five of

¹³ For more details on this topic see: Soto Baquero (2004) Microfinanzas y transferencias como incentivos para facilitar el desarrollo de los mercados financieros rurales.

Brazil and one in Chile.¹⁴ Each experience was selected with the governments of the corresponding States (regional in the case of Chile) and is either ongoing or included in State plans for development policy.

27. The experiences share a number of premises:

- a. The territories were also considered a social construct and not solely the result of geographical characteristics or political and administrative boundaries. In this connection, some territories are defined by geographical or natural boundaries, such as Valle del Paranapanema in the state of São Paulo in Brazil; by economic boundaries, such as the region of Citrícola de Nuevo León in Mexico; or by administrative boundaries such as the province of Arauco in the region of Bio-Bio in Chile. This diversity in criteria provides a laboratory in which it is possible: (i) to analyse the impacts of different territory identification criteria on the promotion of development using a territorial approach; and (ii) to establish criteria for identifying priority regions for the public promotion of development.
- b. Coordination, whether horizontal (between players acting in the same territory) or vertical (between players at different territorial levels), and linkage between different public and private programmes, projects and investments are essential for development in the territories. Horizontal coordination seeks to maximize use of available resources and capacities and to minimize overlapping and disorganization to achieve the intended objectives; vertical coordination seeks to generate the necessary confluence of public and private investment and to minimize the dissipation of resources for development.
- c. Management of development policies and programmes should be expanded to the intermediate or "meso" level (between the state or region and the local level) because of the recognized limitations of management at local (municipal or communal) level. Intermediate level institutional structures are therefore needed for the management of development. Such new institutional arrangements are being set up in all the experiences in a variety of forms, such as regional councils, development agencies, associations of municipalities and trusts, that go beyond the local level.
- d. Also needed is a long-term vision of territory that extends beyond the diagnosis of problems towards a future agreed by the players involved in development planning, identifying new opportunities and potentialities to serve as engines of development.
- e. Strengthening social capital is a determinant of development of territories. Capacities need to be built in the territories for the management of development promotion processes and to ensure the participation of players and social groups. Fundamental in this connection is the training and education of players in the territorial approach to development.
- f. Ways of integrating marginalized sections of rural society need to be found, recognizing the need for specific measures including their facilitated access to assets, from land to education and technical training.
- g. The bias towards the agricultural sector should be removed to reflect the growing importance of linkages between the agricultural and the non-agricultural economy. This is essential for the generation of new income opportunities and the integration of the territory into dynamic markets. In brief, there is a need to promote reconciliation of the territorial and the sectoral dimensions of development.

28. One of the lessons learned from these experiences in establishing new institutional arrangements is that there is still a sectoral bias towards agriculture in the planning of

¹⁴ The regions and states in Brazil are: Valle do Salgado (State of Ceará), Região Noroeste (Minas Gerais), Cantuquiriguaçu (Paraná), Valle dos Cocais (Piauí) and Valle do Paranapanema (São Paulo). In Mexico: Región Otomi-Tepahua (estado de Hidalgo), Región 06 Sur (Jalisco), Lerma-Chapala (Michoacán), Región Citrícola (Nuevo León) and Cañón de Juchipila (Zacatecas). In Chile, the territory of Arauco, in the region of Bio Bio (8th Region).

development. However, there is also a need to avoid the risk of relegating the agricultural sector to a secondary role in the rural territories. Strengthening the participation and bargaining power of producers and their organizations in development processes requires a focus on family farming. The shaping or strengthening of food and agriculture production chains is a recurring theme in the experiences.

29. The involvement of the State is essential at its various territorial levels for establishing the new institutional arrangements and for planning and implementing the territorial development strategies. The involvement of the State is determined by the political and administrative decentralization that is taking place in Latin America and is characterized by the greater responsibility assumed by local bodies (mainly municipalities); by the mismatch between responsibilities and resources transferred to local level, not infrequently resulting in the capture of resources; by the limited management capacity of these bodies; and by the need for coordination between the different agencies.

30. Coordination between government agencies, whether within the same territory or between different territorial levels, is hampered by a lack of appropriate institutional mechanisms. There is a need for mechanisms that permit the conjunction, integrity and coordination of public expenditure and the effective deployment of resources for best possible use of opportunities for regional development.

31. Participation of the private sector is still very low and needs to be boosted through incentives. This means explicitly recognizing the role of the private sector in galvanizing and building the territory, and in securing the necessary investment. There is an increasing need to look for a public dimension to private investment, especially in the forging of alliances between players.

32. A regulatory framework is needed for the new arrangements that are emerging. The array of initiatives taken in the three countries to form intermediate institutions still lacks a regulatory framework for the establishment of contracts and their duration beyond political and electoral cycles. There have however been a few institutional innovations to give legal status and thus autonomy to these new arrangements, the experience of the region of Ceará, in Brazil, being one example. In this region, the institutional arrangement was based on a regional development council and the creation a civil society organization of public interest, a juridical structure existing in Brazil since 1999 for the formal recognition of non-profit organizations, such as associations and mainly NGOs. With State support, a modality in the legal system was used to formally recognize the new institutional arrangement.

33. These experiences reveal the need to identify and prioritize projects with the greatest potential to galvanize growth and development. This requires more efficient processes of consultation to deal with internal conflicts and conflicts between social sectors and players.

34. Extremely important is the linkage of territories and economic dynamics beyond their boundaries. Opportunities for development do not necessarily coincide with administrative borders. In the states of Jalisco and Zacatecas, in Mexico, the dynamic of emigration to the United States had hitherto been viewed as a problem by the Mexican communities because of the resulting aging and feminization of the population, but this phenomenon is now beginning to be seen as a potential for development on account of the remittances. Mechanisms are needed to channel these remittances towards productive projects that can boost investor confidence and thus willingness to invest in the medium and long term.

35. If this linkage is to be made, it is important not only to identify opportunities for products or services of a territory but also to consider the economic aspects in development strategies. Some experiences indicate a bias towards the social dimension in the strategies employed. Socially oriented projects, such as digital inclusion or the integration of groups in extreme poverty, are supremely important, but it is the economic aspects, such as the generation of employment and income, that give territorial strategies their sustainability.

V. BROADENING THE SCALE OF SPECIAL PROGRAMMES FOR FOOD SECURITY (SPFS): FROM PILOT PROJECT TO NATIONAL PROGRAMME

36. Since 1994, FAO has been promoting its Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) to help achieve the targets set by the World Food Summit. The Programme is designed in two phases: a pilot phase with the implementation of production projects in rural communities and an expansion phase towards National Programmes for Food Security (NPFS) whose objective includes the management of national food security policies.

37. The SPFS is currently being implemented in 27 countries of the region (15 in Latin America and 12 in the Caribbean) with a total investment of about US\$168 million, most of which is provided by the countries themselves.

38. The pilot phase of the SPFS was directed towards broadening food supply in rural communities with high food insecurity. This approach has produced a stock of "good practices" for food production and for improving food security in rural communities. In its expanded phase (NPFS), the focus on food availability is supplemented by the other dimensions of food security endorsed at the World Food Summit: access, use and stability of food supply.

39. The main challenge for SPFSs in Latin America is their transition from pilot project to National Programme. The adoption of a territorial approach to promoting food security has proved essential for successful transition. The territory (region, association of municipalities, etc.) is the favoured level of management and coordination of food security policy, using all the advantages of ongoing decentralization and broadening the participation of civil society players. The experiences in territories are closer to contributing to and connecting with national-level policies and programmes.

40. The National Programmes for Food Security aim to gradually increase their population coverage and to replicate over an increasingly larger geographical area the lessons and "good practices" obtained from SPFS pilot projects or other programmes with similar or complementary objectives. These "good practices" include: the incorporation of low-cost technological innovations with short-term impact on food availability, food production and the rational and sustainable management of natural resources and the promotion of income-generating activities, whether agricultural or non-agricultural.

41. Depending on the characteristics and specific demands of individual countries, this expansion phase of the SPFS envisages:

- a. Contributing towards refining legal and institutional frameworks for effective application of the right to food and/or the food and agriculture systems.
- b. Helping design national food security policy.
- c. Collaborating in setting up systems for the early warning of food security crises and emergency response to natural disasters.
- d. Collaborating in strengthening national food quality and safety systems to improve competitiveness on world markets.
- e. Facilitating the participation of private and public players and civil society in forming national alliances against hunger and linking these with an international alliance against hunger.
- f. Promoting the exchange of knowledge and experiences among developing countries (South-South cooperation) in combating hunger and undernutrition.
- g. Contributing towards educational and training programmes in nutrition and food security policy.

42. There is also the incorporation of the territorial approach to development which provides an opportunity to explore the potentialities of urban and rural linkages and the economies of scale

that the "intermediate" dimension usually generates. The possibility of establishing alliances between players in a territorial dimension to development thus becomes a central element of the search for new forms of social integration of the poorest members of society into markets in order to broaden the scope for the generation of employment and income.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

43. In the light of the approach presented and the practical experiences taking place, we recommend:

- a. Incorporating into the design of public policy:
 - i. Aspects of rules and incentives that facilitate the action of social mechanisms in regulating markets to ensure consideration of the public interest¹⁵.
 - ii. The rationality, decisional logic and behaviour patterns of the "target population", stating how expectations and incentives generated by policy will lead to a change in behaviour pattern according to main objective, whether this be to reduce their social vulnerability or achieve their economic integration into markets, or both.
- b. Giving higher priority to public policy oriented towards the economic and social integration of family farms (small and medium rural economic units) in order to achieve better balanced processes of rural growth and development.
- c. Facilitating the creation of participatory structures for the promotion of development¹⁶ with the basic objective of enabling the expression of productive energies and of projects that would otherwise not be designed or implemented. The aim is for social organization and participation to enable the best placed local players to influence and change the quality of their social integration into the dynamics of the region in which they live.¹⁷
- d. Creating a regulatory framework for the new institutional arrangements that are emerging at territorial level in the countries of the region. This regulatory framework will provide the juridical and institutional support needed to facilitate the realization of public-private initiatives, which could in turn draw more investment into the territories and increase opportunities for the generation of employment and income.
- e. Emphasizing the systematic organization and dissemination of "good practices" in regional development approaches. Most countries of the region are promoting initiatives in this regard in collaboration with international cooperation agencies, whose dispersal should be kept in check though a collective learning effort.
- f. Ensuring the alignment of incentives among different public programmes with common objectives and target population or territory of impact. The incentives of an income transfer programme should be aligned with the incentives of programmes for the promotion of micro-enterprises, whose incentives should be aligned with those of micro-finance programmes, which should in turn be aligned with those for the development of non-financial service markets. Relevant instruments are programming agreements for the coordination of public investment in territories, and formal agreements between one or more governments (regional, state and/or intermunicipal consortia) and one or more line ministries for the realization of fixed-term actions related to investment projects in the territories.

¹⁵ In this connection see the text of Arnaldo Bagnasco (1988).

¹⁶ Rural development councils (at different levels: community, municipality, regional, State), trusts, rural or regional development agencies, are examples of organizational forms that are being created and strengthened.

¹⁷ As Morgan (1996) affirms, "... as no knowledge can compete with local knowledge, especially local tacit knowledge, the regional level should be the primary locus of responsibilities for the design and supply of policies and support to enterprises".

- g. Finally, adopting a multidimensional and interwoven optic of the countryside that incorporates the urban with the rural, the community with the intermediate town and decentralization towards the municipality in order to ensure the territorial balance of the region and the nation. Investment in infrastructure, in education and in human and social capital are the central strands of a coordinated policy directed towards building a solid institutional structure in which the rural localities gradually take over the leadership of their own development.

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