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**DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE  
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE**

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## **DAC Network on Poverty Reduction**

### **POVNET Agriculture Consultation**

#### **Summary Record**

**Meeting held on 20-21(a.m.) September 2004**

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**POVNET AGRICULTURE CONSULTATION  
SUMMARY RECORD  
20-21(AM) SEPTEMBER 2004, PARIS**

1. The Agriculture Consultation was organized by the POVNET Agricultural Task Team and held in Paris, France on September 20-21. 72 representatives participated from development agencies, research institutes and public and private sector representatives from both developed and developing countries (see final LOP attached).

2. The POVNET Task Team on Agriculture, led by the United States, aims to *develop a shared understanding of emerging issues underlying the role of agriculture in pro-poor growth*. With this initial work taking shape, it was decided to consult with partners with a view to allow for adjustments in the direction of work and outputs where necessary. The papers presented included conceptual pieces (e.g. on the New Agenda for Agriculture) and *hot topic papers* which synthesize broader emerging issues so far discussed within the Task Team.

3. The objectives for this consultation were to address the following questions:

- Do these papers accurately reflect the constraints and opportunities to pro-poor growth in these three areas?
- What are the agriculture, rural economy and related policy implications of these topics?
- What interventions should be introduced at the level of partner government, donors, the private sector and civil society (producers and associations) in order to enable pro-poor growth through agriculture? Do these interventions need to be differentiated by Rural Worlds?
- How should policy changes be introduced within the present development architecture?

**Workshop summary and outcomes**

4. The main outcomes from the discussions are as follows:

- *Relevance to the New Agenda*: The consultation confirmed that the issues were relevant for developing countries and that further work should focus on fine-tuning and identifying policy implications.
- *Additional topics*: There is a need to consider linkages between farmers and out-growers, implications of agro processing, and to address agricultural labor, agriculture's relationships to other sectors and regional characteristics. A transparent and responsible position on new agricultural technologies (i.e. GMOs) should be developed.

- *Scope of hot topic papers:* It emerged from the discussion that the titles were not consistent with the contents for all papers. It was agreed that the papers would be revised accordingly (or titles changed) and that a chapeau to each paper would be helpful in putting them into the wider context of the New Agenda for Agriculture.
- *Policy implications.* Policy implications and appropriate interventions were discussed in all groups but with varying degrees of specificity. The Task Team will need to prioritise this work now and decide how the Rural World concept can be operationalised in this regard.
- *Continued dialogue with participants:* Participants to the consultation are encouraged to maintain electronic contacts in order to ensure relevance and follow up.

5. The Agricultural Task Team meeting in the afternoon set out to address outstanding questions, such as (i) scope and audience for the papers, (ii) additional areas of work and (iii) ways to develop synergies with the other two POVNET task teams on infrastructure and private sector development.

#### **Plenary – The New Agenda for Agriculture, Pro Poor Growth and Smallholder Opportunities.**

6. Chaired by the POVNET Chair Emmy Simmons, the workshop included presentations and discussions on the New Agenda for Agriculture and three hot topics. The presentations and discussions are summarized below:

7. Felicity Proctor (NRI) laid out the context of the *New Agenda for Agriculture*, highlighting ways in which society places multiple and sometimes conflicting demands on agriculture. She presented the main trends and transformations in the sector as well as the necessary pre-conditions and underpinnings for pro-poor agricultural growth. The *New Agenda for Agriculture* aims to build consensus on agricultural policy within the framework of growth and poverty reduction, including strengthening the voice of smallholders and the wider agricultural/food community. The agenda should be forward looking and anticipatory, locally driven and owned. There are no templates and simple answers and the agenda must be flexible. It should build on new partners and foster sectoral linkages. It needs to recognize and address the heterogeneity within the farming/rural labor community as well as the trade-offs in public policy.

8. Endorsing the need for continued efforts in global trade reform, the new Agenda should include the following building blocks:

- Make markets work better for the poor
- Strengthen smallholder participation in global value chains
- Foster livelihood diversification, and
- Incorporate risk and vulnerability into agricultural and rural sector policy.

9. The second presentation by Peter Hazell (IFPRI) focused on smallholders. Contrary to some other researchers who claim that "*small farms are anachronistic in today's market economy*", Hazell showed that smallholders are efficient in most poor countries because labour costs are low compared to the costs of land and capital. Given the concentration of rural and total poverty on small farms, prospects for such farms can be win-win for growth and poverty reduction. IFPRI's research on Africa shows that promoting food staples offers the best growth prospects for many African countries and the best opportunities for many smallholders. Left to market forces alone, the major beneficiaries of the new high value agriculture will mostly be the larger and commercially oriented farms that are well connected to roads and markets with small farmers left behind. The challenge is to make the "new" high value

agriculture pro-poor. A concerted effort is needed by governments, NGOs and the private sector to create a more equitable and enabling economic environment for small farm development.

10. Thirdly, Tim Mahoney (Co-chair of Task Team) presented the concept of Sustainable Livelihoods and the three rural worlds. The Sustainable livelihoods school of research unifies different sectors within a common framework and is centered on people and their livelihoods. Household assets are the critical unit of analysis. In-depth knowledge of livelihood strategies should be the basis for pro-poor policies. The rural worlds distinguish agricultural space by market integration, commercial orientation and access to services. Policy priorities for each of these rural worlds are quite different and promoting pro-poor agriculture growth must take these into account.

11. Ms. Proctor rounded up this series of presentations by introducing proposals for expanding the rural world concept (from three to five rural worlds) and a framework for scenario-building. This shows how different risks and vulnerabilities impact on rural space which is divided into the various rural worlds. The difference in impacts for various rural households is significant for pro-poor agricultural development.

12. The discussion in plenary focused on the linkages between farmers and out-growers, agro processing, and the number of rural worlds (i.e. limit to three or expanded to four or five). Participants emphasized the need to address agricultural labor, agriculture's relationships to other sectors and regional characteristics. It was felt that a transparent and responsible position on new agricultural technologies (i.e. GMOs) should be developed.

#### **Discussion on hot topics:**

##### ***Supermarkets: Smallholder Participation in Global Value Chains***

13. This topic was introduced by Bill Vorley (IIED) who has contributed substantially to earlier work on value chains in the task team. His presentation highlighted options for businesses, national governments and multilateral policy. The paper addressed the challenges to smallholders associated with declining real commodities and the shift to value-added products that are increasingly sold by supermarkets

14. This paper stimulated a wide ranging debate about the opportunities and threats to the smallholder in global value chains. While opinions differed on whether the paper should address smallholder adjustment to supermarkets only or more broadly to value chains, it was widely agreed that the topics were highly relevant to discussions on the new agriculture agenda. Participants agreed also that urgent action was required to address the issue, particularly as the threats to smallholders are serious.

15. The discussion highlighted the policy implications at the level of the public sector, the private sector, the household level and the research community. As in any discussion related to pro-poor growth and the contribution of agriculture, the recommendations are ultimately highly context specific, and specific policy options will vary by country and commodity. The challenges with regard to bulk commodities are quite different from sourcing for supermarkets. Similarly, cocoa and coffee pose policy challenges which are different from fresh fruits and vegetables. The starting point for the discussion was the need to distinguish between smallholders with capacity to adjust to the new trends and those without, and that policies should be tailored accordingly.

16. Policy implications for the private sector/buyers relate to the scope for engaging with smallholders, either through contracts (credit and inputs), employment, strengthened dialogue with producer associations and intermediaries, public-private sector partnerships (PPPs). In this latter area, NGOs may play an important role such as by helping to empower women and other stakeholders.

17. There is a role for the public sector to support positive private sector developments at the level of:

- International – Addressing agricultural subsidies, tariff escalation and dumping at the level of OECD country policies was a key message of the group.
- Supermarkets – Policy can support efforts to harmonise standards and strengthen the capacity of developing country producers to upgrade their standards and comply with food safety or quality requirements. Action should also be taken to address consumer preferences.
- Markets – Policy can support institutional capacities, provide market information, control monopsony power and address risk and vulnerability.
- Households – Policy must recognise the heterogeneity of households and take account of the different rural worlds without being constrained by this characterisation. A general policy objective is to help reduce transactions costs and provide an appropriate competitive enabling environment. More specific objectives for households include supporting greater access to assets and public goods as well as adjustment assistance for households unable to benefit from the trends.

***Livelihood Diversification in Developing Countries:***

18. *Introduction to topic:* The presentation by Priya Deshingkar (ODI) focused on how diversification helps to smooth seasonal dips in agricultural income and reduces risks associated with rain-fed agriculture. Diversification is driven by new risks, such as land fragmentation, price volatility, removal of subsidies and environmental risks. There is a close relationship between rural non-farm income and urban locations. Becoming less dependent on agriculture is considered as part of the overall process of becoming better off. Most new jobs are being created in the non-farm informal sector. Workers rarely graduate to the formal sector and there is much scope for policy intervention. Informal sector jobs lack security and permits are rare making many activities illegal and promoting corruption. Policy makers need to understand market and non market barriers to diversification and support peoples own efforts at diversification.

19. *Suggested revisions to paper:* Participants emphasized that migration and remittances constitute just one out of many diversification options. There was concern that the paper implies a pull out of agriculture. The IT perspective resonated well with the idea of a multifunctional household and participants suggested that this should be more accurately reflected in the paper. A revised paper may also give more attention to infrastructure for agriculture and non-agriculture as well as the role of urbanization. Given that many topics relevant to diversification do not feature prominently in this paper, participants expressed concern that the Agriculture Task team's new agenda may be neglecting core issues just because they are not new.

20. *Policy Implications:* The break-out group proposed that the government should regulate the informal sector, while the discussion in plenary showed that there are mixed views as to the need for policy interventions for the informal sector. This problem may relate to different definitions of the informal sector. Participants from India highlighted the need to focus on how agricultural policy links to other areas of policy, as well as on the reform of agricultural policy itself (away from subsidies that benefit industries rather than farmers, e.g. fertilizer subsidy).

21. *Conclusion:* The Chair summarized that migration and remittances are attracting new public policy attention beyond diversification. There is a clear need to recognize that households are multi-functional and multi-locational. Migration should be seen as an opportunity to take advantage of regional differences in opportunities. It is composed of both a push and pull, i.e. a virtuous and vicious circle. The use of labour in poor households is clearly an important area of focus. The Chair acknowledged the differences in opinion as regards to the informal sector which was described as extra-legal<sup>1</sup>

***Incorporating Risk and Vulnerability Constraints into Agricultural Policy:***

22. *Introduction to topic:* John Farrington's (ODI) presentation on the topic of Risk and Vulnerability (R&V) highlighted that risks within productive sectors are increasing with globalization and liberalization. Reduction in risk will help to increase participation in markets and is not just a social protection measure. Much can be done in the productive sectors to reduce R & V, but this is not currently done. Farrington distinguishes between horizontally and vertically integrating R&V concerns and suggests that the role of the private sector is to experiment with new financial products, while *donors and governments* should increase awareness of the merits of R&V management for poverty reduction; broaden the range of R&V measures and mainstream them.

23. *Suggested revisions:* The following revisions were put forward: (1) identifying R&V issues/options for RW1 and RW2 (as well as 4 and 5) (2) highlighting the role of remittances for R&V, (3) linking R&V to indigenous knowledge and technology (4) clarifying how agricultural R&V issues relate to other sectors (5) identifying R&V issues/options at different levels (i.e. household, community, national and regional level) (6) incorporating a regional R&V analysis (7) revising definitions by clarifying the differences between risk and exposure to risk as well as pointing out that some risks are positive and (8) closing a key knowledge gap by developing a risk profile by gender.

24. *Policy implications:* As regards policy interventions, participants highlighted the need to build on broad partnerships for R&V mainstreaming. Some participants from partner countries pointed out that a R&V analysis was absent from PRSPs, and that- where present- it merely constitutes an "add on". R&V should thus be incorporated prior to, rather than, post shock. One major obstacle to properly addressing R&V in the African context is military conflicts at the regional level. There was limited discussion on private sector involvement. While some developing countries (e.g. Tanzania) are already building on the private sector to address R&V issues, the roles of private versus public sector are not clear. At a general level, it was suggested that the public sector provides the environment and incentive for the private sector to get involved.

25. *Conclusion:* The chair summarized that the session has succeeded in putting this important issue on the table. Comments on R&V can be integrated while keeping in mind the original focus of this brief hot topic paper. These new areas of emphasis (hot topics) are to displace previous issues important for agricultural development, and it may thus be more appropriate to refer to a *renewed*, rather than *new*, *agenda on agriculture*.

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1. More discussion on the informal sector or economy is likely to take place in the POVNET plenary since this has been proposed as a cross cutting issue by several task teams for POVNET consideration.

## ANNEX 1

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