PART I
RURAL DEVELOPMENT STATISTICS

II NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

II.1 A few examples of national rural development policies

A system of rural development statistics and its associated indicators must closely map the objectives indicated in the policies formulated by governments. Where policies are not very clearly formulated, statisticians have to anticipate indicators being demanded. In setting them up, they should apply international standards of good practice, as illustrated in this Handbook.

To this end a number of national policy formulations are listed below as illustrations of the level of concreteness in the policies.

The stated national objectives for rural and countryside policy in **England (United Kingdom)** (the UK's constituent countries have their own rural development policies) are as follows (DEFRA, 2004):

- **Economic and Social Regeneration** – supporting enterprises across rural England, but targeting greater resources at areas of greatest need;
- **Social Justice for All** – tackling rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and providing fair access to services and opportunities for all rural people;
- **Enhancing the Value of our Countryside –** protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.

In **Sweden** the regional policy aims at creating conditions for sustainable economic growth, equity and freedom of choice so that similar living conditions are created for all citizens in the country. To this end the Swedish government has given the National Rural Development Agency the following task: "… *to coordinate different sectors of society and working for good living conditions and development opportunities for rural areas and rural populations* …". One of the ways in which the Agency is managing this task is by providing information about the situation in rural and sparsely populated areas so that it can be monitored and analysed (Jönrup, 2003).

In 1999, **Ireland**'s Department of Agriculture and Food published a White Paper on rural development 'Providing for the future: a strategy for rural development in Ireland' (McMahon, 2003). This set out a vision and framework for the development of rural communities in Ireland into the next millennium, concentrating on defining a strategic direction for Government in this area. The White Paper identified a policy agenda with six areas of concern. These are referred to in very general terms in extract shown in Box II.1.

These three national examples must be seen against the background of rural development policy for the European Union as a whole and its aims and objectives. The framework is provided by the Rural Development Regulation (Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 and amendments in Council Regulation (EC) No. 1783/20031257/99) and other legislation. Annex 2 of this Handbook gives more details.

Box II.I Ireland's "Future Vision and Policy Agenda"

The Government is committed to ensuring the economic and social well-being of rural communities, to providing the conditions for a meaningful and fulfilling life for all people living in rural areas and to striving to achieve a rural Ireland in which:

1. There will be vibrant sustainable communities with the range of age, income and occupational groups, such as to allow them to adapt to ongoing economic, social, cultural and environmental change and to enjoy a standard of living and a quality of life which will make them attractive communities in which to live and work; the maximum number of rural households and especially family farms, will be retained; there will be equity in terms of opportunity both between rural and urban communities and between communities in rural areas; individuals and families will have a real choice as to whether to stay in, leave, or move to rural Ireland.

2. There will be sufficient income and employment opportunities to allow individuals and families to live with dignity.

3. Rural communities will enjoy access to education, training and lifelong learning and to an adequate level of social and other services and infrastructures.

4. Rural communities will participate effectively in the structures and decision-making processes affecting them in an inclusive society based on the principles of equity, particularly in relation to gender balance and social justice.

5. The cultural identity of rural communities, in particular the language, traditions, heritage and sense of community will be valued and retained.

6. The rural environment will be respected and development in rural areas will take place in a sustainable manner (McMahon, 2003).

In addition to these EU/OECD country cases, a small sample of developing countries has likewise been covered (cf. section XIII.2.2). Some of their rural development policies are reported below.

According to **India**'s Ministry of Rural Development, India has been a welfare state ever since her independence and the primary objective of all governmental endeavours has been the welfare of its millions. Planning has been one of the pillars of Indian policy since independence and the country's strength is derived from the achievement of planning. The policies and programmes have been designed to alleviate rural poverty, one of the primary objectives of planned development in India. It was realized that a sustainable strategy of poverty alleviation had to be based on increasing the productive employment opportunities in the process of growth itself. Elimination of poverty, ignorance, disease and inequallity of opportunities and providing a better and higher quality of life were the basic premises upon which all the plans and blueprints of development were built.

For India rural development implies both the improved quality of life in rural areas as well as greater social transformation. In order to provide rural people with better prospects for economic development, increased participation of people in the rural development programmes, decentralization of planning, better enforcement of land reforms and greater access to credit are envisaged. In order to ensure that the fruits of economic reform are shared by all sections of society, five elements of social and economic infrastructure, critical to the quality of life in rural areas, were identified (health, education, drinking water, housing and roads).[1]

A partnership between the Government of the Republic of **Zambia** and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in implementing projects in Zambia has contributed to bringing about new approaches in the agricultural sector aimed at empowering local communities. This is being done in line with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

According to a first progress report of the Zambian PRSP (January 2002 – June 2003) (GRZ, 2004), agriculture is a key sector in Zambia's poverty reduction efforts, since most of the poor are in agriculture and also because of the presence of a large resource endowment and conditions suited for agriculture development. The strategy for agriculture is two pronged: (i) ensuring food security and (ii) diversifying agriculture production through promotion of both large-scale and small-scale producers (under out-grower schemes as well as opening up farm blocks). The PRSP also aims at developing water resource infrastructure such as dams, boreholes and wells for improvement in water supply in rural areas and for agricultural use. However, the improvement of water and sanitation in rural areas has been constrained by lack of funding (GRZ, 2004).

An internal **World Bank review** of the first round of 12 PRSPs, covering both Africa and Latin America, indicates major gaps in understanding rural poverty, in particular the linkage between defined actions and outcomes for specific groups of the rural poor and effective mechanisms for selecting and sequencing public sector choice to achieve desired outcomes.[2] The review concludes that much more work is needed to underpin the PRSP process itself in the upcoming PRSP rounds and with implementation to secure, over time, the desired outcomes. This requires greater consensus building between development agencies and state governments on core principles. While much has been done in taking forwards strategic thinking within agencies, the dialogue between agencies and state governments must be strengthened for deepening the analytical underpinning and for shared learning on generic issues.[3]

II.2 Rural development - a sectoral based (agriculture) approach

II.2.1 The agriculture perspective

Historically, agricultural policy has been synonymous with rural policy, or at least has been perceived as such. Although farming is still important in shaping land use, employment opportunities in agriculture are declining in relative and absolute terms, at least in the OECD countries (OECD, 2003).

[1] http://rural.nic.in/i1.htm

[2] The review used as its framework the treatment of rural content issues under the headings of participatory processes; poverty diagnosis; the targets and indicators; and priority public actions – these being the framework set by the World Bank and Fund Joint Staff Assessment (JSA) guidelines. It included an assessment of the PRSP documents and the related JSA documents but did not review related and underpinning working papers and reports.
Annex 1 in Proctor (2002) provides further specific detail.

[3] http://europa.eu.int

Historically, economists saw the main role of agriculture as the supply of labour for the industrialized sectors (Lewis, 1954) and, indeed, it is a necessary precondition for the development process. But by emphasizing this as the only important contribution, other significant functions of the agricultural sector tended to be overlooked.

Whereas most rural territorial units in most OECD countries depended on agriculture as their leading economic engine a half-century ago, today maybe only between one in five and one in every ten, depending on the country, rural countries is "farm dependent", or counts agriculture as its leading source of income. Agricultural policy thus provides less and less stimulus to the viability of the rural economy (OECD, 2003).

Rural employment patterns and perspectives can therefore not be properly understood by focusing analytical attention exclusively on agricultural sector employment. But it is important, whether for a developed OECD country or a developing country, to monitor the share of agriculture in regional employment and to compare the national average with predominately rural, significantly rural and predominately urban areas, both in absolute terms and in annual changes (OECD, 1994).

Data should also be recorded on territorial differences in part-time and **pluriactive farming**, including agriculture/forestry and agriculture/fishery activities. A large proportion of farm labourers are employed part-time and sometimes engaged in other gainful activities. These include the following:

- Processing of agricultural products, for example, cheese making;
- Non-agricultural activities on the farm, for example, agro-tourism on the farm;
- Employment on other farms;
- Off-farm activities (OECD, 1994).

II.2.2 Trends in agriculture in the last 50 years – employment and productivity

Looking at the period from end of World War II until now, agriculture in OECD countries (and many others) has gone through structural change on a scale that hardly any other sector can match. It can be characterized by the following keywords:

- **Plummeting employment** (including self-employed);[4] and
- **Skyrocketing productivity increase**; whilst in the same time
- **Cultivated farmland has been more or less stable.**

In Canada, for instance, about 1.2 million people worked on a farm as a main-job in 1946. By 1976, that number had dropped to a little under a half a million and to 367,400 in 2000 (Trant, 2002). One of the more interesting features is that employment in agriculture declined the most among self-employed farmers with no employees, a group more likely to have smaller farms that can probably more easily be run as a second job. The 1996 Canadian Census of Agriculture reported that 46% of all farmers worked off-farm work at some point in the previous year. The comparable figure in 1941 was 36%. Farmers were initially to be found in the forest, fishing, mining and petroleum industries but they are now participating in all sectors. Falling farm employment, however, has not resulted in the large-scale abandonment of farmland.

Improvements in **agricultural labour productivity** have been quite remarkable in many OECD countries. Again taking Canada as an example, agricultural labour productivity increased more than 5-fold

[4] This is of course not unique for agriculture. Manufacturing has followed the same path but with a lag.
See Chapter V "Industrialization, trade and structural change," in UNCTAD's Trade and Development Report 2003. Capital Accumulation, Growth and Structural Change.

between 1961 and 2000, largely out-performing the 3-fold productivity gains in the goods producing sector and surpassing the gains in the service sector, which had somewhat less than a 2-fold increase.

Another way to view productivity is to measure labour costs per unit produced. Again agriculture clearly appears to have led industrial sectors in terms of productivity gains.[5] In 1961, agriculture was labour intensive in comparison to the goods producing and service sectors of the Canadian economy, sectors which at that time required half the labour of agriculture, to produce a unit of value added production. By the year 2000 that relationship had changed. Labour costs had increased for all sectors as had production. Agriculture was the only sector however where production increased while employment declined. The result was only a 2-fold increase in labour costs per unit of real GDP produced in agriculture in comparison to a 4-fold increase in the goods producing sector and close to a 6-fold increase in the service sector (Trant, 2002).

II.2.3 The current situation for agriculture

Several different and emerging forces affect agriculture. First is the **globalization** of the world economy led by several factors including rising incomes in developing countries, reduction in trade barriers, and large countries moving from planned to market driven economies. For a country's farmers and agribusinesses to compete effectively in global markets, a competitive agricultural system is needed. More than ever, the competitive structure of agriculture is affected by rules of trade, domestic policies, infrastructure development and new technologies (Vogel, 2002).

Second is the concern with the **environmental consequences** of the intensive use of land and water resources and the application of agricultural chemicals. Policymakers are faced with difficult decisions about appropriate actions to ensure that their agriculture system is competitive in the world market, yet is sustainable and in harmony with the environment.

A third force affecting agriculture in many countries is a rising political awareness of the **social implications** of the changing structure of the nation's farms into fewer but larger operations. This is happening to the extent that it is affecting the social structure of rural communities as the displaced farmers move elsewhere. On the other hand, there is a growing population of part-time farmers around urban areas who have employment elsewhere but desire the agricultural life style. While these producers may contribute little to overall agricultural production, they do account for a considerable amount of the land. In economics in transition and parts of the developing world, substantial proportions of total production may be generated by subsistence production. This non-marketed output may play a social role in rural communities that greatly exceeds its nominal significance in national accounts.

The primary issue facing statisticians is that all three forces are operating at the same time. Unfortunately, many countries have reduced the resources devoted to statistics on agriculture, based on its declining share in the national accounts. This is an inappropriate response in that it fails to recognize the wider social roles of agriculture and the need for statistics that relate to them. In particular:

[5] The 3rd edition of the ILO's Key Indicator of Labour Market (KILM) provides estimates of productivity in agriculture, forestry and fisheries (table 18e). Labour productivity is defined as output - measured by gross domestic product (GDP) - per unit of labour input. For a substantial number of economies, the productivity measures for the total economy and manufacturing are complemented with measures of unit labour cost, i.e. labour cost per unit of output. The estimates of the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector are of an experimental nature.

- Agriculture is at the centre of issues concerning land use and the environment.
- Agriculture is the major user of a nation's land and water resources whilst at the same time it is requested to provide an adequate, safe, and nutritious supply of food - a basic goal of every country.
- Agriculture is an important part of many countries' trade balances.
- Agricultural production, more than any other sector, is very volatile as it suffers from the vagaries of weather on top of market and policy driven effects.

In view of this, a well-designed statistics system needs to provide data to guide governmental policy decisions on agriculture as they relate to food security, economic sustainability, trade and other and economic issues that stretch beyond the narrow confines of farming. Conversely, as policymakers grapple with food safety, land use and environmental issues, they will want to know more about how their policies affect the economic and social well-being of farms and farm households. They will want to know about the geographic distribution of agriculture and its supporting infrastructure so that policy can be made more directly to sub-sectors or geographic regions (Vogel, 2002).

II.2.4 Other characteristics of agriculture

Multifunctionality and agriculture

The term multifunctionality is used to convey the notion that agriculture can play several roles in our societies in addition to its primary function of producing food. It implies "*…the existence of multiple commodity and non-commodity outputs that are jointly produced by agriculture, and the fact that some of the non-commodity outputs exhibit the characteristics of externalities or public goods* (OECD, 2001)."

Mulifunctionality also applies to fishing and forestry policies as well as other economic activities but the examples used here will be drawn from agriculture.

The policy context lies in the increased demand for certain of the non-commodity outputs of agriculture. These include not only the environmental goods alluded to above but also social attributes such as the contribution that agriculture makes to the vibrancy, vitality and cohesion of rural society. Thus a statistical system should be capable of the following (after OECD, 2003):

- *Distinguishing public from private goods.* Private goods mean that farmers' production belongs to them. On the other hand, farmers are seen increasingly as agents producing public goods in the course of their private activity: landscape, environment, culture, and so on.
- *Distinguishing material from immaterial wealth*. The agricultural world produces material wealth along with immaterial wealth as, for example, landscape management of the soil and the subsoil, biodiversity, etc.

II.2.5 Perspectives on agricultural policy reform and the rural economy

Developed countries

Agricultural policy reform can imply significant adjustment costs for some individuals and areas in the short term, but the long-term benefits to both farm and non-farm households, and to rural areas generally, can be considerable. While the agricultural sector continues to shed employment, in part the result of long

term pressures (mainly arising from technological advance and static demand) and in part arising from shocks that include rounds of policy reform, jobs are not being created fast enough in other sectors in rural areas to absorb the individuals concerned. In consequence, many rural communities in Europe have a rate of unemployment above the national average.

Rural development policies, even if much more comprehensive and wide ranging than purely agricultural policies, are not a panacea for all the problems or rural areas. The most important task of national governments is to pursue macroeconomic policies conducive to sustained economic growth. The second major responsibility is to implement programmes aimed at reducing the isolation of rural areas, such as ensuring access to educational institutions at all levels, good public transport and accessible modern communication systems (OECD, 2003).

Developing countries

Countries outside the OECD are in general, characterized by an agricultural sector that is much more important in economic terms, and perhaps also in social terms, to rural areas and to the economy and society overall (OECD, 2003). Even in the late 1990s, on average, more than 75% of the labour force in the least developed countries and other low-income countries was engaged in the agricultural sector while the figure was about 35% in other developing countries. Agriculture is thus a very important source of employment and income, with implications for other sectors of the economy, in these countries. Raising agriculture productivity is important for reducing poverty and promoting food security and nutritional well-being (cf. Chapter 3 in ILO, 2004).

Having said this, it is also clear that non-farm activities, which usually grow faster than farm production, will play an increasingly important role in expanding rural employment and income. Rural employment strategies should therefore also be developed in order to spur off-farm employment opportunities (UN, 2003).

II.2.6 The farm policy dilemma

In many countries, agriculture policies are, or have been, overwhelmingly focused on subsidies to commodity growers. In other countries, trade issues or food security are the main focuses of agriculture policies. Broader rural development initiatives only receive a fraction of the subsidies[6] (OECD, 2003).

Countries are, however, becoming increasingly aware of the need for further progressive reductions in domestic agricultural support and border protection, and to shift away from policy measures that encourage higher levels of food production and input use, towards measures that are less distorting of markets and trade.

If productivity gains in agriculture tend to reduce the sector's capacity to create jobs, then viable rural communities may be assured more by comprehensive area-targeted programmes than by traditional agricultural production-linked payments. In other words, a shift from a sectoral to a territorial policy approach is called for (OECD, 2001).

[6] In 2001, total support to OECD agriculture was USD 311 billion, representing 1.3% of GDP across the OECD area (OECD, 2003).

II.3 Rural development - a territorial based approach

II.3.1 Employment – the driving force of rural development

Labour force participation rates are generally lower in rural regions compared to urban regions. Moreover, in most countries, rural women are underrepresented in the labour force. On the other hand, a salient point in many developing countries is that women are typically more likely than men to work in the agricultural sector. For example, women in rural Africa produce, process and store up to 80 % of total foodstuffs, while in South and South-East Asia they undertake 60 % of cultivation work and other food production. As mentioned above, rural areas in developed countries will be confronted with substantial increases in the working age population. This will generate uneven territorial pressures for labour market adjustments (OECD, 1994).

In rural areas there are large variations in employment creation performance. In the OECD area, it has been noted that a group of dynamic predominantly rural regions, representing between 5% and 15% of the total national work force, has experienced employment growth considerably higher than the national economy as a whole. Thus, **rurality in itself is not a handicap for job creation** (OECD, 1994).

To this end the OECD recommends that more attention should be given to studies which examine intra-regional populations and employment dynamics. These studies should address the following questions:

- What role do towns and cities play in rural labour markets and rural development?
- Are there specific patterns of rural, as opposed to urban, employment and population developments?
- What is the economic base of urban and rural structures? Are there significant differences between urban and rural economic bases? (OECD, 1994).

II.3.2 Trends for rural regions

One of the main conclusions drawn from analysing rural development is that rural areas and their economies are very heterogeneous, with large variations from one area to another. In the United States, for instance, most of the economic growth is concentrated in roughly four of every ten rural counties. Counties that are enjoying robust economic growth tend to have one of three characteristics: scenic amenities (such as in the Rocky Mountains), proximity to metro areas (common to the fringe areas of nearly all major metro areas), or are emerging retail and financial hubs (the solitary growth centres scattered throughout the nation).

Outmigration of young people caused by lack of employment opportunities and inadequate access to educational and leisure facilities, along with the in-migration of retirees in some places, has led to significant ageing of the population. Moreover, most rural regions have difficulty in establishing the necessary critical mass of facilities, producer services and infrastructures to support economic development. Consequently, entrepreneurs face specific obstacles in starting up enterprises in rural regions.

Some rural regions perform very well, even better than urban ones. A central question is therefore why certain rural regions perform better than others? Transport infrastructures and towns in the region or the vicinity of a major urban centre are often mentioned as important factors. Each region has different combinations and levels of capital endowment (physical, financial, human and social). What counts is the availability of one form of **capital** or another as much as the ability to properly exploit it. In some cases, **intangible aspects** (entrepreneurship, cultural identity, participation and partnerships) are the most important in making the difference.

Some regions succeed well in exploiting their natural resources such as wood, oil, minerals or hydro-electricity or to attract major public infrastructure investments. Another successful strategy has been to focus on amenity-based development schemes. The success of some rural regions has been due to their ability to valorise public or quasi-public goods such as a clean environment, attractive landscapes and cultural heritage (including food).

Farming can continue to play a role in, and remains a tool for, rural development. It is important to dispel the outdated notion of the "full-time farm business" with the household wholly dependent upon agricultural income (see Chapter IX).[7] Farm households often have multiple income sources (see Chapter X). In other words, the health of the farm and non-farm economies in rural areas is inexorably linked.

Dramatic shifts in populations provide another piece of evidence that a new approach to rural policy is needed. Many rural places with strong economic gains also experienced strong in-migration, while weak economies often saw an outright loss in population. Labour market statistics also show that unemployment remains highest in the most remote rural places while the suburbs to large cities had the lowest unemployment rates (OECD, 2003).

In this context, the OECD recommends that analyses should be made of **demographic pressure indices** (such as the population between 5 and 14 in relation to the population between 55 and 64) that indicate potential new workers per retiring worker. Another key measure is the **dependency ratio**, which is defined as the population between 0 and 14 plus over 65 in relation to the active population in the age range of 15-64.

II.3.3 Entrepreneurship and job creation in rural areas

Factors often cited as associated with successful rural areas include well-established inter-firm relations within clusters, and accessible and valuable natural and cultural resources that increase the sustainable attractiveness of places.

Amenity-based development and industrial clustering seem also to offer sustainable prospects for an increasing number of rural areas. Together with increased connectivity due to information technologies, a greater and diversified social demand on rural areas has widened the range of regions considered as having marketable values.

Commuting has always separated where people live and work (Johnson, 1999). Improved transportation allows the distance between work and home to grow. Tele-commuting opportunities allow this distance to grow still more. Furthermore, spatially separated production, using information technology to coordinate production activities, splits the traditional workplace.[8] E-commerce, which is growing rapidly

[7] In this context, Ray Bollman from Statistics Canada has an interesting observation: "Historically, at least in Canada since the period of European settlement, a significant share of farm operators worked off the farm. Also, historically, a relatively small share of the time of farming families was involved in growing plants and husbanding animals. A large share of the time was involved in the manufacturing of horsepower (i.e. raising and maintaining horses) and in the production of fuel (i.e. growing and harvesting hay and oats) and in food processing (washing and sorting eggs, churning butter, separating the cream from the milk, canning fruits and vegetables) – today, work in these manufacturing sectors is classified as "off-farm work" but this manufacturing activity used to take place on farms. Thus, perhaps, the same share of farm household time is still allocated to tending crops and livestock – the difference today is that the manufacturing of farm inputs and the processing of farm products tends to take place off the farm."

[8] See ILO's World Employment Report 2001, which examines the employment challenges and opportunities emerging from the rapid growth of information and communication technologies (ICT) around the world. Recognized as among

both in volume and in the range of goods and services traded (from stock to groceries), also tends to separate where people live and spend their money. .

The development of rural areas is based more and more on interactions with adjacent areas. Co-operation between communities and the setting up of horizontal partnerships between public and private actors over areas sufficiently large to define coherent, common strategies have been seen as the most effective means to enable these new forms of territorial development (OECD, 2003).

II.3.4 Are manufacturing and services now the pillars of rural development?

While agriculture, forestry and fishing formed the traditional economic base of rural areas, the set of externally-oriented economic activities in rural space is now much larger. Manufacturing, tourism, and senior level government facilities of various types are now important sources of external income in many rural areas. Indeed those areas that still depend on farming and the other traditional primary sectors are typically less well off in terms of a broad range of economic indicators.

Moreover, in some rural communities there is no tradition of an indigenous **entrepreneurial class** and little experience in small-scale manufacturing. In these places, especially those with limited natural amenities, the potential to diversify beyond agriculture is mainly a function of the ability to attract outside industry.

Nevertheless, manufacturing will likely remain a central element in rural development. While many places are trying to expand the role of tourism this is not a real option for rural communities that are too inaccessible or lack a high enough level of amenities to attract visitors. Similarly there is little potential for producer services to play a major role in most rural places. Almost by default, the survival of many rural communities will depend upon maintaining a manufacturing base.

Large firms, relative to the size of the community, can present significant development problems. Entrepreneurship tends to be reduced if there is one dominant firm in the community. Further, the closing of a single, dominant firm represents considerable risk to the entire community.

II.3.5 Merging industry sectors

Just as the computer industry merged with the telecommunication industry the same phenomena has happened with agriculture and agri-food. The potential for synergies also exist between agriculture and pharmaceuticals, agri-tourism and agri-environment. As an example, the pharmaceutical industry is introducing processes where pharmaceutical inputs are grown in crops or animals instead of being produced in factories.

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the major drivers of economic growth and wealth creation, ICT are raising productivity, reducing costs and increasing the speed of communications to help shape the new global economy. The effects of ICT on the emergence of new enterprises and the demand for new skills and knowledge are profound, and this study illustrates how they have changed labour market conditions and industrial relations as well. While analysing how new technologies influence the quantity, quality and location of work, the book also looks at where jobs will be lost and created in industrialized and developing countries.

II.3.6 Industrial structures and characteristics of rural and urban economies

In all countries, establishment size, in terms of persons employed, is smaller in rural than in urbanized regions. The average size of establishments differs considerably and systematically among types of regions and countries, the smallest establishments are found in predominately rural regions. As a result, the average size and structure of enterprises and establishments in relation to employment change should be highlighted (OECD, 1994).

In the context of industrial structure, it should be noted that **specialization** in many rural economies has made them particularly vulnerable to business cycles and resource depletion, for instance in mining and forestry. A mix of business with respect to size and industrial and service sector variety seems to better lay the foundation for a more stable labour market (OECD, 1996).

II.3.7 Sectoral mix and territorial dynamics

Analysis by the OECD has shown that the economic structure, i.e. the mix of different types of economic activities and size of particular activities, restrains employment growth in predominantly rural regions. At the same time, it is region-specific factors that make a predominantly rural region leading or lagging (Bollman, 2003).

It has been further been shown that 78% of OECD territorial disparity in GDP per capita is due to disparities in labour productivity (GDP per worker). In some countries, such as Denmark, Netherlands, Ireland and Canada, it exceeds 90%. Even among a fairly homogeneous group of countries such as the OECD there is a wide range in territorial disparities of GDP per capita, ranging from an adjusted Gini coefficient of between 0.15-0.20 in Italy, Hungary, United States and Mexico to below 0.05 in Norway, Czech Republic and Sweden (Bollman, 2003).

The large differences in the performance of dynamic and lagging rural regions cannot primarily be explained by differences in their sectoral mix. Other characteristics such as networking and governance as well as a range of additional characteristics, often not yet identified or well understood, are responsible for generating positive territorial development dynamics, which more than offset the disadvantages stemming from unfavourable sectoral structures in rural regions (OECD, 1994).[9]

II.3.8 Education and employment in rural regions

The level of education of the rural labour force is an important indicator in any assessment of rural employment conditions and trends. Unemployment rates differ significantly according to educational attainment levels.[10] People in rural regions tend to have lower education levels and are more likely to work in industries with low-skill jobs (OECD, 1994).

[9] See the current research activities of Vincenzo Spiezia, Head of the OECD Territorial Indicators and Statistics Unit, which focus on the analysis of regional comparative advantages and the assessment of policies for regional competitiveness (cf. OECD, 2004).

[10] See the ILO KILM 11 'Unemployment by educational attainment,' which focuses on unemployment among workers categorized by their level of educational attainment. Specifically, the indicator is the percentage distribution of an economy's total unemployed according to five levels of schooling - less than one year, less than primary level, primary level, secondary level and tertiary level. Information for the indicator is given in table 11 for 105 economies, to some extent (Source: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/kilm/kilm11.htm).

More than half of the world's population and more than 70 % of the world's poor are to be found in rural areas where hunger, illiteracy and low school achievement are common. Educating a large number of people in rural areas is crucial for achieving sustainable development. Poverty reduction strategies are now placing emphasis on rural development that encompasses all those who live in rural areas. Such strategies need to address the provision of education for the many target groups: children, youth and adults, giving priority to gender imbalances. This complex and urgent challenge should be addressed systematically, through an intricate set of policy measures, at all levels of education systems.

Rapidly changing technologies and increasing globalization also suggest that better education and training have become essential for sustainable livelihoods and the competitiveness of the rural economy. For many years, the approach followed by policymakers and education specialists has been to focus on practical and occupational agricultural skill training provided mainly at the secondary and tertiary levels. Yet, in a spatial and economic environment increasingly shaped by non-farming activities, and in a policy context dominated by the poverty reduction agenda, education for rural development requires a holistic approach going beyond the narrow boundaries of the traditional agricultural education and training concept.

II.3.9 The role of tourism

Although there are many methodological problems in measuring tourism, and few hard figures exist to support claims, it is clear that it is a powerful force of change in the economy in both the developed as well as in the least developed countries (OECD, 1994). Tourism is a growth sector in terms of employment. Overall, it grows faster than total employment, two to ten times faster than for the labour force as a whole, and is often considered an important potential source of employment for many rural areas. When successful, it helps to preserve local jobs in marginal rural areas, creates new jobs where the activity prospers, and diversifies employment.

Tourism related statistics are hard to identify. There is an international definition but the delimitation is very unclear. In ISIC revision 3, which is the international activity classification, tourism covers:

- ISIC 55: hotels, restaurants and cafes;
- ISIC 60-63: transport and travel;
- ISIC 92: recreational, cultural and sporting activities (market and non-market services).

Of course not all jobs in the above industries can be attributed to tourism.

When analysing the contribution of tourism to rural employment large differences between countries are noted. These, however, are partly due to differences in the content of the statistical categories (OECD, 1994).

Agri-tourism constitutes a significant opportunity where agriculture coincides with scenic or heritage amenities (OECD, 2003). The popular tourist regions in the predominately rural group all have in common a very low population density (OECD, 1994). The interdependence between agriculture and tourism can be illustrated by the example of the **United Kingdom**. The economic consequences of the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the UK negatively affected farming as well as other rural economic activities. In the UK, income from farming has declined, leaving tourism as the predominant rural economic activity (OECD, 2003). Rural tourism is worth nearly £14 billion a year. It is estimated to support 380,000 jobs in the English countryside, compared to 374,000 in farming in 2000 – including farmers and their spouses. Rural England is home to some 28% of the population and 35% of registered businesses (OECD, 2003).

A contrasting example comes from **Zambia.** The Zambian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (2002-2004) section on tourism sets out a plan that envisages two broad interventions – national and zonal, both of which are expected to encourage investment in the sector. National interventions include rehabilitation of roads in tourist areas, rehabilitation of museums, tourist marketing, and human resource development. Zonal development refers to intense development work in identified tourist areas to make them attractive to tourist investment. It includes building or rehabilitating access roads, tourist roads, and airports where appropriate, and the provision of power (rural electrification).

Significantly, it also includes finding world-class investors (comparable in status to the Sun International) in the respective development zone, who will be the key engine in the area. Smaller lodges can feed off them. Within this framework, formulae have been designed regarding how the local people can participate in and benefit from the tourism expansion. The first priority zone is the Livingstone and Victoria Falls area because it promises the greatest impact with spillover effects to other parts of Zambia. It is followed by Kafue National Park (physically linked to Livingstone), the Lower Zambezi, and the Lusaka area. Other areas will follow in subsequent PRSPs.

II.3.10 The importance of communications

The lack of access to frequent and reliable transport is a key factor in contributing to disadvantage and social exclusion in rural areas (OECD, 2003). However, scarce public funding must be prioritized. In this context, it could very well be argued that places that are growing "deserve" more public investment in their infrastructure and places that are declining have (almost by definition) too much infrastructure.

The **Zambian** PRSP (2002-2004) is once again a case in point on the issue of prioritization of public resources. The Government of Zambia pledges that the PRSP places a high premium on infrastructure development, particularly rural roads, in order to facilitate faster and diversified agricultural activity. This is well reflected in the scarce resource allocation pattern during the PRSP period. To encourage rural-based agricultural processing and mechanization, the energy sector is also receiving priority attention.

In any analysis of the employment situation and development trends in rural regions, **mobility** plays a significant role as a regional balancing mechanism for the labour market. Increased mobility in the form of commuting has consequences, not only for the labour market and for social policy, but also in inducing additional traffic and the creation of new challenges for transportation infrastructure policy (OECD, 1994). Commuters are defined as persons who cross regional borders to get from their place of residence to their place of work.

Peripherality has been defined in terms of distance from centres of economic activity. As such it is closely related to, but distinct from rurality, which is defined more often in terms of (low) population density (since rural areas may be very accessible, and some peripheral regions may contain major cities). It is also distinct from the density-based definitions of rurality in being a continuous (as opposed to dichotomous) concept (Bryden, 2001).

The simplest measurements of the impact of location on the development of an area are those which consider the transport infrastructure itself, expressed by distance or travel time to nearest nodes of inter-regional transport networks, for example:

- Road length by class;
- Distance from an international airport;
- Distance from a mainline railway station;

- Travel time to nearest urban centre (Bryden, 2001).[11]

There are, however, many more types of measurement of **accessibility** that have been utilized by researchers and policy practitioners. These include access to networks, distance to the nearest network node, number of direct connections, number of lines arriving at node, travel cost to one other node, average travel cost to all nodes, expected value of utility of visit to all nodes, potential accessibility, number of people reachable with a certain travel cost, inverse of balancing factor in spatial interaction model, and accessibility assessed by expert judgement.

II.3.11 The role of information technology for rural development

Access to information technology is not universal, not even within the same country. The Canadian case study shown in Chapter IV of this Handbook shows that overall household Internet connectivity and use of computers are lower in rural and small town communities than in their urban counterparts. One reason for this is the difference in educational attainment between rural and urban areas.

Information technology provides possibilities for rural communities to have access to a whole range of services without being hampered by their distance to providers. It also provides increased opportunity to work from any physical location, which has favoured rural areas with excess labour supply, lower wages and a lower cost of living. This is a feature of teleworking from home, but it also refers to the relocation of jobs from industrialized to developing countries, such as "back-office" staff located in call centres, data entry and processing functions and software development. These kinds of services tended to move first to rural areas in developed countries and then to certain developing countries, India in particular.

Work that is independent of location constitutes a growing share of employment in industrialized countries. Almost one fourth of the workforce in the United Kingdom now carries out at least some of its work at home. By 2003, there will be an estimated 1.3 million employed in call centres in the EU, up from an estimated 670,000 in 2001. The technology is, however, universal. What constituted a chance for rural communities in developed countries to have access to a new labour market also represents an opportunity for developing countries.

More than 850 million people in developing countries are excluded from a wide range of information and knowledge, with the rural poor in particular remaining isolated from both traditional media and new information and communication technologies which would improve their livelihoods.[12]

Studies on information systems serving rural communities have focused on specific sectors such as agriculture or health, instead of covering rural community needs in a holistic manner. Rural information systems must involve rural communities and local content must be of prime importance (Mchombu, 1993). Traditional media have been used very successfully in developing countries, and rural radio[13] in particular has played a major role in delivering agricultural messages (Munyua, 2000).

[11] There are many arguments from traditional location theory and more recent trade theory (Krugman, 1991) about where new development is likely to take place. Geographic concentration relies on the interaction between increasing returns, transport costs and demand. For an extensive discussion of the accessibility issue see Banister and Berechman (2000:50-54).

[12] Source: Communication for Development. Http://www.rdfs.net/themes/communication_en.htm

[13] Using a popular radio programme called "*Kumuzi Kwathu,"* (Our Village) and "*Chikaya chitu"* in Chewa and Tumbuka respectively, the Zambia Community Radio Project (ZCRP) (a United States Aid - funded project under the Education Development Centre (EDC) Africa) is reaching out to thousands of villagers, passing on life-saving

The Internet is rapidly expanding in developing countries. This expansion is, however, largely an urban phenomenon and most rural communities are not yet able to take advantage of the services available to their urban neighbours. Pilot projects linked to rural and agricultural organizations can help ensure that rural communities and agricultural organizations remain part of regional and national Internet initiatives.

In 2003 and 2005, the United Nations organized the World Summit on the Information Society with the aim of developing strategies to reduce the "digital divide" (Munyua, 2000).

II.3.12 Rural services standards

People in rural areas have a right to reasonable access to a range of services to meet their various needs (OECD, 2003). These include not only basic services such as health care, schools, postal services and other communication means, and security (police, fire-brigades etc.) but also retail outlets of private goods and services as well as access to leisure and cultural activities and participation in the political process.

II.3.13 Objectives for rural policies

The focus for promoting rural development and employment should be on transforming and developing new and distinctive economic functions (OECD, 2003). The interests of the majority of rural citizens, and even most farm families, seem to be best served by a development strategy based on investments to build local assets. In this context focus should be on:

- Enhancing "competitiveness" of rural regions by targeting local collective goods;
- Shifting from an approach based on subsidizing declining sectors to one based on strategic investments;
- Shifting from a sectoral to a place-based approach;
- Enhancing business assistance and networks of knowledge;
- Developing human resources through vocational training, including an important emphasis on entrepreneurial skills, and "capacity building" for policy actors at local levels;
- Ensuring new ways of providing public services in scarcely populated areas (OECD, 2003).

II.3.14 New issues in rural policymaking

Past public policies have made simplistic distinctions between rural and urban areas. Furthermore, they have tended to regard rural areas as homogenous, with uniform problems and similar opportunities. In fact every rural place has different assets (OECD, 2001).

Why do regions have such distinct performance profiles? Regions have certain basic resources and characteristics such as potential-geographical location, proximity to markets, topography and climate, natural resource endowments, industrial heritage and endowments of human, social and physical capital that to a large extent shape their development trajectory. Even the new information technologies that make the factor of distance less important do not necessarily lead to more uniform spatial patterns (OECD, 2001).

information on HIV/AIDS and inspiring people to fight poverty through motivational success stories they profile on selected villages (Chanda, 2004).

The need to develop tailor-made regional policies has been implicitly recognized by central governments and by, for instance, the EU (for example, the LEADER initiative follows a bottom-up approach).

The development of rural areas is increasingly based on interactions with adjacent areas. The inter-regional aspect is not always taken into account at the international level because these cross-border zones do not coincide with traditional administrative divisions.

In practice, a wide variety of institutional arrangements for the delivery of rural policy have been noted in OECD countries, but some common features are:

- Decentralization towards regions and localities;
- Support for "bottom-up" development initiatives;
- Attempts at better coordination of policies affecting rural areas at central levels through inter-departmental and inter-ministerial working groups;
- Greater coordination and cooperation at regional and local levels usually through partnerships (OECD, 2001).

It is widely argued that development policy and practice must allow for diversity in the goals and objectives of development, must acknowledge that it should include social, cultural, environmental as well as economic dimensions, and should allow for democratic processes at all levels (OECD, 2001).

II.4 Conclusions

The main characteristic of rural policies, at least in developing countries, is the **shift from a sectoral to a territorial policy approach**, including attempts to improve coordination and to integrate the various sectoral policies at regional and local levels. There is a shift from an approach based on subsidising declining sectors to one based on strategic investments to develop new activities. More attention is given to quasi-public goods and "framework conditions" which support enterprise indirectly. To this end there is an increased focus on local specificities as a means of generating new competitive advantages, such as amenities of an environmental or cultural nature or traditional or labelled local products (OECD, 2001).

Another salient feature of present rural policies is the increased use of partnerships between public, private and voluntary sectors in the development and implementation of local and regional policies. This has also implied decentralization of policy administration and, within limits, policy design to those levels (OECD, 2001). There are clear moves away from centralized "top-down" policy and delivery towards more local "bottom-up" approaches within an agreed policy framework, although there are still issues about the balance between these and what institutions and governance are needed in support.

Regional policies play an important role but they need to understand and be sensitive to the differences between urban and rural areas within the region (and between different types of rural area), which may require different approaches. Regions may, in themselves, be at too high a level and sub-regional approaches may be needed, as demonstrated by Mexico's focus on microregions. It is essential to identify, on an individual basis, each particular area's opportunities and advantages as well as its disadvantages.

Agriculture continues to play an important role in rural economies - in many developing countries it is the key sector - and its impact on the landscape, the environment and rural amenities is critical.

Rural areas are not just problems; they also present opportunities and the potential to contribute positively to competitiveness, for example through the growth of microbusinesses, niche markets and the increasing role of women entrepreneurs (OECD, 2003).

The provision of infrastructure (such as transport, telecommunications, water and sanitation, power and gas, and major water works) and the enhancement of social capital designed to increase the competitiveness of rural areas are more and more the focuses of rural policies. An important part of these policies is the creation of a good environment for entrepreneurship and local initiatives (OECD, 2003). Rural development initiatives do not necessarily need to come from the "capital", although there is a need for the central coordination of a wide range of policies affecting rural citizens through institutional arrangements for inter-departmental and inter-ministerial coordination (OECD, 2001). Central support needs to provide more flexible arrangements for rural development.

Other conclusions, partly overlapping what was said above, drawn from experiences of rural policies are in short:

- Efforts to create new institutional arrangements at local and regional levels to define policy objectives priorities and strategies, and implement policies and programmes at these levels.
- A new focus on trying to improve the "competitiveness" of rural areas.
- Attempts to divert resources from programmes which focused on subsidies to maintain existing rural activities to programmes which focus on support for investment in human and social capital, diversification of economic activity and the related creation of new enterprises, key infrastructure, the environment, and innovation.
- Efforts to reinforce rural economies, principally through diversification of economic activities.
- Enhancing business assistance, especially efforts to diffuse new technologies through R&D and the development of specialized regional institutes or centres.
- Developing human resources through vocational training.
- Developing and commercializing natural and cultural "amenities."
- Creation of local products based on local identity and aiming at a market niche.
- New ways of providing public services in rural areas.
- The increasing use of programme evaluation procedures both as a control and a learning mechanism (OECD, 2001).

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