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Governance of rural development in Egypt

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Abstract Egypt is facing great challenges regarding its economy in general, and rural development (RD) – including agriculture – in particular, such as: the extreme poverty among small-scale farmers; lack of coordination and integration between various stakeholders; complicated local administration system and centralization; and reduced governmental investments. Therefore the current study aimed at identifying rural development policies in Egypt, recognizing the stakeholders both in public and civil society involved in designing, implementing and evaluating RD, and analyzing the relationships and linkages between these actors.

Various analytical tools were used to provide a comprehensive overview of RD in Egypt, including quantitative and qualitative methods. A questionnaire survey dealing with coordination of RD policy in Egypt was performed in May–September 2013 with 50 representatives of key public, civil and international organizations. SWOT analysis was used to verify the gaps in the current RD strategy approach.

The review of literature and survey revealed no explicit RD strategy, only agricultural and socio-economic strategies. Additionally, a significant gap was found between plans and their implementation, besides problems in planning, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and implementation in "what is considered RD". Most of the studied organizations lack coordination, financial resources, and community participation. Moreover there is a big confusion when defining RD. About 48% of stakeholder organizations mentioned that most of the RD programs and projects only partially reflect people's needs indicating that these programs are centrally planned and implemented without any participation.

In light of these results, the study recommends that RD strategy in Egypt needs to be structured and based upon coordination and integration between various sectors and stakeholders either national or international to avoid duplication and to better fulfill RD goals and objectives that will eventually lead to "true" socio-economic development, food security and poverty alleviation.

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Table 1 Main characteristics of Egypt's geographical territories. *Source:* Sustainable agricultural development strategy "SADS", toward 2030, pp: 166, 168, 170, 172,175, Cairo, 2009.

Territories	Population size (million)	% of population	Population density (inhabitant/km)	Illiteracy rates	Female illiteracy rates	% of women in labor force	% of poor families	Area (thousand) km^2	Agricultural area (million feddans)[a]
Upper Egypt	12	16.5	24.2	47	55	18.4	45.8	495	1.13
Middle Egypt	15.3	21	286	48	50	13	38	54	1.5
East Delta	8	10.9	100	33	43	29	23.5	79	1.2
West Delta	12.6	17.5	51.2	30	40	27.5	15.6	179	1.7
Middle Delta	20.2	27.8	1450	32	42	24.5	8.7	139	2.3
Total	68.1	93.7	1911.4	190	230	112.4	131.6	946	7.83

[a] 1 ha = 2.34 feddans.

Introduction

Rural development in Egypt has a long history traced back to the nineteenth century. Generally, the national political system was always very influential in setting up the outline of state orientation toward the rural sector and formatting the type of interrelationship between rural areas and the other state sectors. This fact is valid across the last two centuries regardless of some minor differences and details from time to time (Nawar, 2006).

Agriculture, also witnessed significant developments over the last two decades with direct effects on the role of the agricultural sector in national income formation and promoting exports. Such developments have affected farmers' delivery system as related to the cropping structure, applied technology, levels of income, and farmers' response to market changes (MALR, 2009). The share of agriculture sector in GDP is about 14.5% (CAPMAS, 2006).

Agriculture sector growth rates have widely differed from one period to another due to the effect of general economic conditions, and development and investment efforts. The 1981/1982–1986/1987 period witnessed higher growth, estimated at an annual rate of 3% during this period, while the 1987/1988–1991/1992 period was at an average annual rate of 2% (MALR, 2009).

Agricultural areas have increased from around 5.87 m feddans[1] in 1980 to around 8.44 m feddans in 2007, an increase of 44% during this period. The cropping area has also increased from 11.1 m feddans in 1980 to 15.4 m feddans in 2007 (MALR, 2009).

However, in same time population size increased and reached 72,798,031 inhabitants of which 31,370,925 inhabit urban areas representing about 43.09% and about 41,427,106 inhabit rural areas representing about 56.90% (CAPMAS, 2006).

In addition to many threats and challenges that faces the agricultural sector and rural areas of Egypt (i.e. small and fragmented land holdings, water shortage and droughts, natural resources and environmental problems, poverty, poor health and malnutrition). High pressures and strains on the country's economy have resulted in poor or weak infrastructure and have pushed rural people deeper into poverty. In this situation, the majority of people is forced to live in poor living conditions and is deprived of basic facilities of life (Mohammed, 2005).

[1] Feddan is a land measuring unit in Egypt, 1 ha = 2.34 feddans.

Thus the study is organized in three main sections that helps in fulfilling the current study's main objective which was exploring the existence of a rural development strategy in Egypt and if governance of current plans is applied or not. The first section will provide an overview literature about relevant concepts and characteristics of Egypt's geographic territories, agriculture and rural status in Egypt's rural areas, rural development history, the current agricultural strategy, the socio-economic plan and investments allocated for that purpose and finally governance. The second section will address the questions arising, objectives, materials and methods, and measurement of variables. The last section will deal with the results, conclusions and recommendations.

The geographic territories

There are five main geographical territories apart from Great Cairo territory; Upper Egypt, Middle Egypt, East Delta, West Delta, Middle Delta. The Great Cairo territory includes Cairo, Giza and Shoubra El-Kheima cities, while Upper Egypt territory includes Assuit, Sohag, Quena, Wadi Al-Gadid, and Aswan governorates, as for Middle Egypt territory holds Giza, Beni Suef, Fayoum and Menia governorates. Qualiobia, Menofia, Gharbia, Dakhlia, Kafr Al-Shiekh and Dametta governorates forms the Middle Delta territory, whereas, Sharkia, Port Said, Ismailia, Suez, North and South Sinai forms the East Delta territory and finally the West Delta territory incubates Behira, Alexandria, Nubaria and Marsa Matrouh (Table 1).

The agricultural labor force represents about 26.01% of total labor force (CAPMAS, 2006). The total agriculture production valued in 2012 about 209.3 billion EGP (1 EGP = US$0.15) (old and new lands) with a net income of 150.7 billion EGP, whereas crop production amounted 117.5 billion EGP which represents about 56.1% of total agriculture production. The animal production valued about 77.4 billion EGP representing about 37% of total agriculture production, finally fish production valued 14.5 billion EGP representing about 6.9% of total agriculture production (MALR, 2009).

The local administrative system

The Egyptian administrative system was developed in 1960; it was an organizational technique by which the country's regions were divided into local units that practice their authority according to the constitution within their regional