

Is rural development becoming more diversified?

The sustainable development of rural areas requires a reversal of the phenomena of loss of population, and in consequence, loss of economic activity. The objective of MSSD consists in diversifying the rural economy by the development of activities other than agriculture.

The relative evolution of agricultural populations and rural populations allows us to measure the importance of agriculture in the rural environment and indirectly the diversifying of economic activities in rural areas.

In the Mediterranean countries, agricultural populations are continuing to decline.

While the rural population is increasing overall, the agricultural population is continuing to go down.

In the northern Mediterranean countries, the rural and agricultural population are going down. The decrease in the agricultural population is especially high. In France, for instance, the agricultural population went down from 10 million in 1961 to 1.5 million in 2006.

In the southern and eastern countries, the rural population increased at first, then stabilised, except in Egypt where growth continues. The agricultural population has increased slightly and has initiated a decline in some countries such as Turkey and Morocco.

As a percentage of the rural population, the Mediterranean agricultural population went down from 62% to 48% between 1990 and 2006. In 2006, this is lower than the worldwide average (78%) but is much higher than the European average (19% for the EU-27).

The labour force in agriculture has fallen greatly to less than 10% in the European countries, (except in Greece 15%), the Balkan countries, and in Libya Lebanon and Israel, while in Turkey and Albania, it is about 40%.

Definition

This indicator measures the ratio of the agricultural population in the rural population. The agricultural population is defined as all the people dependent on agriculture, hunting, fishing and forestry: those people actively occupied as well as their dependents.

Precautions / Notes

Rural populations are generally defined as complementary to urban populations, the definition of which can be different from one country to the next. The distinction between rural and urban is based on several criteria such as the population of the towns or built-up areas, the density of the population, the extent of facilities, the proportion of the farming population in the active population, and so on.

The thresholds considered for the definition of urban differ greatly from 400 inhabitants in Albania to 10 000 in Italy. This makes international comparisons difficult.

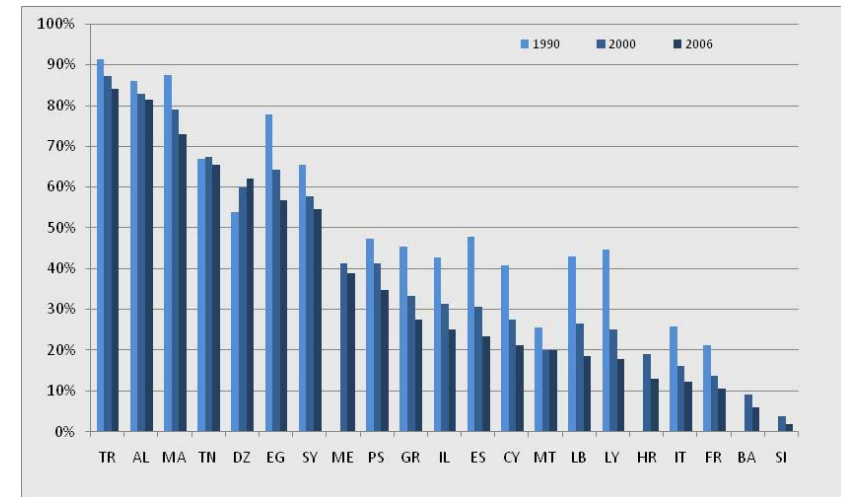
Part of the agricultural population could be urban, thus bringing values above 100 % (Egypt in 1980)

Sources / References

FAO

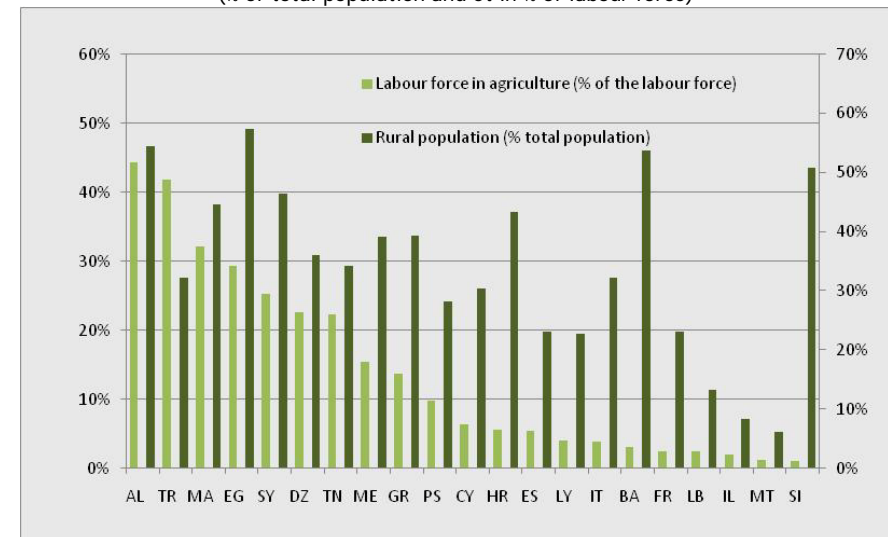
15. Ratio of agricultural population vs. rural population

Agricultural population /rural population 1989 - 2006 (%)



Source : FAO

Rural population and Labour force in agriculture 1992-2004 (% of total population and et in % of labour force)



Source : FAO