



MONITORING THE MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT(MSSD)

AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT National Study Algeria, Summary

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Soon upon its independence, in 1962, Algeria implemented agricultural policies which were, to say the least, utopian, belonging in a context of socialist ideology, but which, unfortunately, had proved to be inefficient and had largely contributed in the decline of this sector.

This gave way to a period of lethargy, if not marginalisation of agriculture, during the 1990s due to the political-economic tensions experienced by the country. All the same, Algeria ratified most of the international conventions related to environment protection and sustainable development (RAMSAR, UNFCCC, UNFICBD, UNFCCC,...etc.).

In 2000, a National Agricultural Development Plan (PNDA) was implemented, then subsequently revisited to become the National Rural Agricultural Development Plan (PNRAR), which mainstreamed the rural development dimension. The initial objectives of the PNDA were extended to the rural environment via incorporating such aspects as restoring ecological balance and improving the living conditions of the rural populations. These measures were followed upon by the preparation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Rural Development (SNDRD) which was intended to encompass the whole range of issues relevant to the rural environment by fostering an integrated, balanced and sustainable rural development of the various rural areas: devitalised areas, remote areas, potentially competitive agricultural areas, and agricultural areas close to urban areas.

Algeria is at grips, however, with certain handicaps that are difficult to overcome, and this, owing not only to its semi-arid to arid climate over the major part of the country, but also to the demographic boom it reported during the 1970s (over 3%), coupled with a massive rural migration, as well as a significant imbalance of the population space distribution (about 90 % of the population are concentrated over 12 % of the territory). It was this imbalance that led the public authorities to devise a new National Land Use Plan (SNAT) via regional workshops whose objective was to design several Regional Land Use Plans (SRAT).

The present study demonstrates that, despite the priority position granted to agriculture and to rural development over the past few years in Algeria, this sector is still not free from dysfunctions. Employment rate in rural environment stood at 15.8% in 2006, while it was estimated as over 51%, for the same year, in urban environment, as against a national average of 37% for 2006. As for the working rate in 2006, it stood at a mere 11.3%, as against 37.1% in urban environment for the same year. The rural migration that still obtains in certain zones attests to the incapacity of the public authorities to reduce regional and socio-economic inequalities. Poverty continues to exist in rural environment, while all forms of degradation of the natural environment (desertification, erosion, pollution ...etc.) represent a distressing reality that attests to the insufficiency of the means allocated.. This is due to the country's lagging behind in matter of decentralisation, as well as to the absence of a significant number of implementation texts related to the laws on environment protection and sustainable development. Organic farming, a non negligible option, scarcely develops in Algeria owing to the absence of a clear policy in this regard, as well as to a lack of support to farmers. The irrigation water deficit, the low capacity in the maintenance and operation of water structures and the very complex land property issue are but some of the factors hampering a viable agriculture and a sustainable rural development. Although official data are more or less optimistic, particularly in matter of unemployment and of AGDP growth, rural areas continue to lag behind with respect to the rest of the country and still suffer from a great inequality in resource distribution, as well as from the non involvement of the rural population in decision-making processes, in spite of the local governance dimension which constitutes one of the main components of the National Strategy for Sustainable Rural Development (SNDRD).