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Rural Development Policy in the Ivory Coast

by Dr Manfred Schulz, Berlin *

The Ivory Coast has been the scene of a remarkable economic upsurge since it gained independence in 1960. Agriculture and forestry have been the mainstay of growth. The evolution of socio-economic structures in the rural areas is outlined in the following article which also discusses aspects of the present reorientation of the policy of rural development.

The Ivory Coast is one of the few African states which are openly following a liberal, capitalist road of evolution. In 1974 the internal development of the country was greatly affected by the turmoil in the international economic system since its outward-looking economic orientation made it especially vulnerable. In the second half of the year the sharp fall in demand by 40–50 p.c. for timber, the most important export commodity, had a paralyzing effect on forestry, sawmills and timber processing which aggravated the employment problems in the rural areas.

The close integration with the world economy also had the effect of accelerating the inflationary processes in the Ivory Coast. While about F.CFA 20 bn¹ had to be paid out for mineral oils in 1974, against F.CFA 7.3 bn in 1972, imported plant and equipment were on average 25 p.c. dearer². The decline of the real wages of agricultural workers on day hire was only inadequately countered by the Ivory Coast Government raising the minimum wage from F.CFA 160 to F.CFA 200. The — in part quite substantial — increase in world market prices of agricultural produce, on the other hand, was passed on to Ivory Coast producers. The officially fixed contract prices for coffee and cocoa were raised by 25 and 59 p.c., respectively, and for cotton — varying according to quality — up to 70 p.c.

Yet, in relation to comparable countries the economic position of the Ivory Coast is on balance still satisfactory. After a number of years with annual growth rates of over 10 p.c. and regular balance of trade surpluses the gross domestic product probably still grew by 6 p.c. in 1974. Stagnative structural tendencies are however discernible, and uncertainty about the future cyclical trend raises questions about the validity and fea-

sibility of the ambitious development programmes for the rural areas.

In the sixties the purport of development policy for the rural areas was clear: it had a one-sided orientation towards growth. Priority was given to increasing the production of export crops in the southern forest belt. A modest start was made at the same time on the creation of agrarian processing and import-substituting industries. The importance of agriculture as part of the national economy diminished, but its export role was not affected.

The major aim in the production of export crops was to achieve a more diversified pattern of field cultivation. Despite undoubtedly substantial achievements in this respect a glance at the 1973 export statistics shows the traditional export commodities timber, coffee and cocoa still in a dominant position; all other products together do not amount to even one-third of the export value of the three major commodities.

The development policy of massive support for agriculture aimed at creating a growth nucleus in the south of the country as a basis for further development steps. Incomes accrued to the rural population in the zones of intensive development through large production increases in export crops and flanking measures to regulate prices and stabilize earnings. The planned steady accrual of incomes was intended to provide an impulse and incentive for further progress. There was little effort to realize at the same time an incomes distribution concept which would have eased the access of the socially weaker categories of the population to the new development opportunities by employing selective measures. Social and cultural policies for the rural areas clearly received less attention than in neighbouring Ghana for instance.

The result was that the growth process, dominated as it was by intensification of the agricultural production for exports, gave rise to certain

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¹ Rate of exchange: F.CFA 100 = French F. 2.

² cf. *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens*, No. 1513, November 1974, p. 3084.

Table 1
Gross Domestic Product by Sectors ^a
(in p.c.)

	1960	1970
Primary sector ^a	47	31
Secondary sector	15	22
Tertiary sector	38	47

^a On the definition of the terms Gross Domestic Product and Primary Sector in Ivory Coast statistics cf. R. Güsten et al.: *Der Entwicklungsplan der Elfenbeinküste* (The Development Plan of the Ivory Coast), *ibid.*, p. 2.

Source: R. Güsten et al.: *Der Entwicklungsplan der Elfenbeinküste (1971-75) und Ansatzpunkte für die Entwicklungshilfe in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (The Development Plan of the Ivory Coast [1971-75] and Starting Points for Development Aid by the Federal Republic of Germany), IFO-Institute for Economic Research, Munich 1971, p. 2.

strains. It accentuated the existing regional differential between the northern and western parts of the country, on the one hand, and the flourishing southern zone with the metropolis, Abidjan, on the other. The dualism of modernized export crop cultivation and food crop production by unchanged traditional methods has not yet been superseded by an integrated farming system even in the supported agricultural units. Increasing social differentiation has led to the emergence of

Table 2
Ivory Coast: Exports in 1973

Commodities (crude, partly or wholly processed)	F.CFA bn
Timber	65.7
Coffee	45.5
Cocoa	34.0
Pineapples	7.1
Cotton	5.3
Oil and coconut palm products	4.4
Bananas	3.0
Rubber	2.0
Diamonds	1.5
Miscellaneous	22.5
Total	191.0

Source: *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens*, No. 1494, June 1974, p. 1959.

an — according to local standards — prosperous upper stratum of planters with rentier-capitalist characteristics as against a mounting number of underprivileged people, mostly immigrants, farm labourers and also smallholders, young farmers and women. The rise in the divorce rate is an indicator of growing social instability. For some rural areas it can already be shown that women on average change their husbands twice or even more often ³. Social critics have therefore assessed the socio-economic changes in the rural areas of the Ivory Coast as on balance detrimental. Samir Amin spoke of growth without development ⁴.

³ cf. N. Schöpfung: *Difficultés et Espoirs de l'Animation Féminine en Pays Dida* (Difficulties and Hopes of Feminine Activation in the Dida Country), Report of the World Peace Service Berlin, Berlin 1974 (in course of publication).

In the current five-year plan — 1971/75 — an attempt is made to remove the weak points from the rural development concept. To the previous priorities of safeguarding economic growth and diversifying agricultural production have been added as further options the lessening of regional imbalances, more even distribution of the fruits of economic growth between town and countryside and between different social categories, extension of education services and cultural activities in the rural areas and advancement of indigenous cadres ⁵. The greater regionalization of development projects on which a start has been made in the meantime should be emphasized. An integrated approach is being made towards it: export and food crops are to be interlinked and as far as possible complemented by modernized stock-breeding in the agricultural units, and the agrarian industries are to be developed further so as to enhance the relations between the primary and secondary sectors.

Regionally, the north of the country has since the early seventies become an additional development centre after the previous concentration on the southern regions. It is the major object of the measures for which the Federal Republic of Germany provides the finance. The integrated regional programmes in the south-western part of the Ivory Coast and in the central region around the Kossou-dam for which autonomous development corporations bear responsibility have been gaining in importance in the last two years.

Development Agencies

The implementation of far-reaching development schemes in the rural areas is greatly facilitated by the existence of a relatively dense and well-arranged network of development agencies and instruments. Reference should be made first of all to the careful preparation of the material wanted for planning. A comprehensive range of data has been made available by many research institutes and consultancy firms and especially by the Ministries of Planning and Agriculture. Regional inventories and specialized methodological planning systems have been drawn up for certain regions, and these allow selective use to be made of the development instruments for specific purposes.

The administrative reform which is still in progress is also of importance for rural development. The

⁴ cf. S. Amin: *Le Développement du Capitalisme en Côte d'Ivoire* (The Development of Capitalism in the Ivory Coast), Paris 1967, p. 288.

⁵ cf. Ivory Coast Ministry of Planning: *Plan Quinquennal de Développement Economique Social et Culturel 1971-1975* (Five-year Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan for 1971-75), Paris 1971, pp. 30-42.

six former administrative districts have been divided into 24 départements, and many smaller sous-préfectures are being newly set up. These decentralization measures heighten the citizen's awareness of the presence of the state and the accessibility of the administration. Regional committees of technical and economic cooperation have been set up recently to encourage the rural population to take part in the resolution-forming and decision-making processes. The population has its representatives on these committees and so have the various development organisms; so far however nothing is known about their operational efficiency.

The autonomous development corporations ARSO (Autorité pour l'Aménagement de la Région Sud-Ouest) and AVB (Autorité pour l'Aménagement de la Vallée du Bandama) are regarded in the Ivory Coast as promising models for future development agencies. They are to foster the accelerated development of key areas with the help of regional plans and through centralization of the decision-making powers and personal and material resources.

The main burden of agricultural development however will still rest on the public and mixed companies (*parastatals*) which have the task of furthering the production of specific crops⁶. Such promotion or intervention companies have been established for most major crops including cocoa, cotton, rice, tobacco, palm and coconut products, sugar etc. Apart from rendering agricultural advice, they perform — in part far-reaching — functions by helping to provide means of production, credit and marketing assistance. With some 3,000 people on their staffs these development companies are the core of the operational development agencies. As their pay-roll has swollen and their action programmes have spread over wider fields and regions, their organisational efficiency has come in for criticism. There is dissatisfaction with the coordination and cooperation between them. A reform of these development companies is therefore now being discussed in public.

Development of the Productive Resources in Agriculture

The fuller utilization of productive resources remains the cardinal aim of rural development policy. In the central and southern regions with strong growth priority is being given to the wider general application of stimulating technological

advances. There are essential innovations made possible by advances in land cultivation methods which must be applied generally: an economically sound, soil-fertility preserving system of crop rotation, integration of animal and vegetable production, tillage of the land by animal-drawn ploughs and partial mechanization of the growing of field-crops. The necessary changes in farm organisation involve basic agrarian issues and the land law in particular and likewise social structural problems impinging on the division of labour and cooperation in families and village communities.

Typical measures which are chosen as examples from the long list of promotional activities in agriculture are the extension of cocoa and coffee cultivation (including the wider use of the new Arabusta variety) in large joint areas formed of individually owned plots, combined growing of cotton and food crops, mechanization of land preparation and tillage aided by the state-owned MOTORAGRI company. The trend is away from promoting specific crops and towards fostering integrated agricultural production. In the economic fringe areas with a peasant population at a low level of development it is generally intended to intensify the promotional measures. Here it is often the first task to prepare practicable programmes and special attention must definitely be given to food crops and the use of the manpower.

The population growth, the influx of people from the draught areas and accelerating urbanization have lately brought food supply problems to the fore. A higher degree of self-sufficiency is aimed at. In 1973 it was necessary to import 147,000 t of rice alone, and a campaign for increased production of food crops is now being started. It chiefly relates to the growing of mountain rice, of rice in irrigated areas and of maize. Late in 1974 a big sugar factory was opened in the northern part of the Ivory Coast which can process 600,000 t of cane and produce 60,000 t of sugar, enough to cover all the country's needs which until now were covered by imports. Mention may also be made of the encouragement of meat production, especially on state-owned ranches. It is as yet uncertain what success these efforts will have, hampered as they are by reduced profitability and other factors.

Improvement of Material Infrastructure

The agricultural development programme goes hand in hand with an action programme designed to improve the material infrastructure in rural areas. It includes the creation of a network of semi-urban centres with training facilities for rural crafts. Considerable investments are envis-

⁶ On the organisation and working methods of the production-promoting companies cf. M. Schulz: Zur organisatorischen Gestaltung der Landwirtschaftsberatung bei fortschreitender Entwicklung — Das Beispiel Elfenbeinküste (On the Organisation of Agricultural Advice Services under Progressive Development — The Example of the Ivory Coast). In: Zeitschrift für ausländische Landwirtschaft, 14th year (1975), No. 1.

aged in the traffic system, including the country's first motorway, to help to open up the countryside to socio-economic advances. A programme for the creation of nucleus villages with improved public utilities and other services has been under way since the late sixties. A programme for house-building on measured surface areas has been drawn up for farmers. The social house-building activities however have been deadlocked by the enormous costs involved and the current inflation which has cut the financial means of the rural population.

The establishment of regional development funds for infrastructural measures (the Fonds Régionaux d'Aménagement Rural) is now being pressed forward; they are to help finance rural electrification, bridge and runway construction, etc. The draught disaster in the Sahel zone, which had a peripheral effect on the Ivory Coast, has given an impetus to the construction of water supply installations for rural communities. Programmes of this nature are proceeding apace at the present time.

Improvement of Social Infrastructure

The activation of the cultural life and the improvement of the social constitution of the masses of the rural population by voluntary organisations, local development associations and other organised development cells is the third component of the rural development programme. In view of the growing "flight from the land" of the younger generation who have received a school education suitable forms of organisation for self-advancement and communal development must be offered to the dynamic sections of the population who are open to progress. In this connection special tasks are now being allocated to community development and cooperative services.

The supreme purpose of these efforts is to stimulate self-propagating development processes. The

training of farmers as activators is the cardinal feature of this kind of community development work. They are elected by and representatives of their villages and given their training in special institutions (the Centres de Formation des Animateurs Ruraux — CFAR). When they have gone back to their own communities, these activators are to act as catalysts. They are expected to set an example by conduct conforming to development needs, to exercise a positive influence on other villagers, to initiate communal self-aid actions and to serve as intermediaries between the village, the state administration and the development promotion agencies.

A national agency for community development services (Office National de Promotion Rurale — ONPR) was set up at the middle of 1973 (by Decree No. 73/372 of July, 1973). It is to undertake studies on the evolvement of concepts on motivation pedagogics, prepare action programmes for radio and television, train community development advisers (training of activators), carry out appraisals of advice methods on behalf of production-promoting companies and arrange activation programmes in the framework of regional development. The work of the community development advisers is to be coordinated on the département level by the development committees which were mentioned earlier. Little has come of this scheme as yet except that a central agency, which is rather weak on personnel, has been set up. The national development plan therefore provides that the community development effort is to be concentrated for the time being on integrated operations, i.e. on model districts and modernization zones and on the AVB and ARSO development schemes.

Parallel to this work new life is to be infused into the cooperatives which have been deliberately kept at a short rein in the past ten years. It is to be one of the activation objectives to promote

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the formation of cooperative societies in the villages. These would have to undertake storage, collecting and purchasing functions. The selling of products would be left to central cooperatives which are to be set up in the nucleus villages and would be supported by larger cooperative organisations on the district and regional level. A centre for the provision of guidance (Centre National de Promotion des Entreprises Coopératives – CENAPEC) has already been set up to engage in these tasks; cooperative society consultants, managers, book-keepers and secretaries have been receiving training in this institute since 1970.

Many observers are taking a critical view of the theoretical concept, the present state and the future opportunities of the community development and cooperative services. One of many problems in this field concerns the compatibility of these programmes and agencies with the production-orientated development apparatus and instruments and the coordination and cooperation between the two categories of development agencies.

The use of television for rural schools is of greater relevance than the other methods mentioned. Under this programme all instruction is based on television transmissions. It may yet become an example for developing countries generally. Several ten thousand schoolchildren have access to television lessons, and the medium of television may also have a considerable potential for adult education in rural areas of which more use will no doubt be made in future.

Summary

In an appraisal of the rural development policy in the Ivory Coast a distinction should be made between the credibility of the theoretical concept underlying the development action programmes and their promise of success in practice. What view is taken of the development concept as such depends on the observer's approach to social policy. To lay stress on the growing of export crops is certainly not the way to free the Ivory Coast from its heavy dependence upon industrialized western states. The Ivory Coast does not aim at systematically extending its room for manoeuvres contrary to the interests of the capitalist states but wants a dialogue, a middle course between differing interests, in order to derive maximum advantage from trade and development aid. From the point of view of the rural population of the Ivory Coast it is clear that its material living conditions are by and large certainly not inferior but indeed distinctly superior to those in neighbouring states. The section of the population with incomes in the lowest quartile would however fare much better under a socially fairer concept

of incomes distribution. Critical is also the lack of attention to the basic aspects of the increasingly pressing problem of the rural guest workers. There are probably nearly a million immigrants in the Ivory Coast, chiefly from Upper Volta and Mali; many of them live in rural areas where they form an exploited sub-peasant class at the bottom of the scale.

The future viability of a growth concept which is based on agriculture, forestry and import-substituting industries must be questioned. There seems to be a need for industrialization going beyond the existing agrarian industries in the rural areas, in part at least through establishment of export-orientated industries. The opportunities for setting up such industries are however closely limited by the reality of the international division of labour. This makes careful market observation in the Ivory Coast and in the West African region even more essential.

The main problem of social and cultural policy for the rural areas is not so much a failure of the theoretical concepts as the essential lack of such concepts. The education policy applied to schools alone seems convincing and enduring. As for the concept of cooperative and community development services, it must be doubted that they are a suitable means of tackling and altering the reality in the rural areas. An approach relying on communication techniques and socio-therapeutics is being used here to achieve what are most far-reaching objectives. They cannot, in my view, be accomplished without political mass mobilization.

Such misgivings about the concept aside, the programmes so far started in pursuit of the ambitious objectives in the fields of social and cultural policy are rather meagre. There is, besides, a shortage of qualified staffs and of training facilities for them. The necessary outlay for a network of stimulative services would seem to be beyond the country's economic capacity.

A different view may be taken of the programmed activities in the agricultural sphere including the improvement of the material infrastructure. The planning in this field has by and large been careful, and the necessary structural changes are on the way. The organisational capabilities of the responsible agencies suggest that the programme will be carried through relatively efficiently. A positive view may also be taken of the regionalization of the development schemes because it allows the different sectors of the national economy to be interlocked more closely. An unsatisfactory aspect of this programme is how social and rural cultural policies are incorporated in the package of linked regional measures.