

GOVERNANCE IN THE RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL WORLD*

The term governance, which has been in widespread use for some little time now, has long been a fact of life in agriculture. Ever since the Mediterranean emerged from the Neolithic revolution, its agricultural activity has been the focus of more or less constant concern of authorities ruling the various territories. Management of stock, to provide against lean times, was already part of agricultural policy in the time of the pharaohs. Since then, with varying success, various political powers have exercised control over a sector seen as highly strategic since it is the paramount guarantor of food security. Aware that agriculture is nothing without investment to support it, authorities have also engaged in development of agricultural lands, especially after the Second World War. This effort in the sphere of agriculture was the crucial element of rural development which, as time went by, involved other sectors in the North Mediterranean countries in order to diversify activities in the countryside. Despite that, social and economic disparities between the rural and urban world persist, especially in the South and East Mediterranean countries (SEMC). Poverty, lagging development and social tensions contribute hugely to this.

When concerned with agriculture and rural development in the Mediterranean sphere, it is worth analysing the policies, and the challenges that underlie them, in the various countries of which it is composed. From this point of view, it quickly emerges that the European countries of the northern shore, which have combined their agricultural policy (through the Common Agricultural Policy, CAP) with rural development, are quite different from the SEMC. Moreover, two trends are at work at different levels: in governance within States, a clear dynamism can be seen with the emergence of numerous actors; more generally, there has been a desire to establish partnerships at Mediterranean level as a whole for some years.

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Actions by Mediterranean States for agriculture and the rural world

In the South of the Basin: from interventionism to liberalisation

The agriculture and agro-food sectors have been a fairly constant focus of attention of States since the 1950s. In the context of decolonisation, interventionist policies were pursued for a long time in the SEMC, at least until the early 1980s. The challenge for these agricultural policies was multiple and hard to implement in practice: social (redistribution of incomes by redistributing land) economic (producing more to limit the drain on foreign exchange and thus foreign debt), political (maintaining domestic stability) and geopolitical (freeing themselves from the threat of food as a weapon).

In the Mediterranean, the problem of access to land was acute. In the 1950s, cultivable land was characterised by its unequal distribution and its scarcity. With varying degrees of emphasis and success, the agricultural policies of the last decades have sought to respond to this dual problem. However, in those regions marked by the arid climate, developing new lands often required more access to water, which in turn demanded the introduction of powerful water policies.

In the East of the Basin, the Ottoman domination was the underlying cause of the unfair land distribution. The seizure of lands by a handful of Arab owners began with the Tanzimat movement in 1858. It consisted in particular of a major reform of the functioning of the Ottoman State apparatus. Many communal lands were then granted by the Sublime Porte to families of ancient nobles or tribal chiefs (*shaiks or sheiks*) to ensure their subjection to the Empire. Under the French and British administrations, landowners, allied to the new powers, were the subject of particular attention by the two mandated rulers, in particular, granting them new lands and many other prerogatives. Initially, the independence of these countries changed nothing, and the new monarchies in place were not concerned with the agrarian situation.

This manifest imbalance in the distribution of land did not survive the changes in regime in certain countries of the zone in the 1950s and 1960s. Inspired by socialism, the new Arab nationalist governments put the redistribution of wealth at the heart of their political priorities. Agrarian reforms rapidly saw the light of day, notably in Syria and Egypt where capping land areas was chosen as a way of limiting acquisition of land. These reforms not only put an end to excessive inequalities but also led to a considerable redistribution of incomes in favour of small farmers. Demographic pressure and the peculiarities of Arab inheritance law, however, led to the splitting of land into ever-smaller plots. Despite the scale of the rural exodus, family farms capable of productive investment could not be developed. This relative setback to the reforms underlines how vital it is for countries driven to conquer new land by the twin necessities of absorbing part of the demographic growth and meeting the food needs of a rapidly expanding population.

In the Maghreb, the question of access to land arose in a different form. It was less a matter of recovering lands belonging to large native families than redistributing the colonial estates left by France which represented 10% of the cultivated land in Tunisia

and Morocco and just over one quarter in Algeria. Land was recovered progressively in Tunisia and Morocco, but it was accompanied both by appropriation by the State and frequent sales to landowners who were already well endowed. In Algeria, the recovery was more rapid and workers on the former estates were the primary beneficiaries. A true agrarian reform was undertaken between 1971 and 1975. The limitation of the size of properties and nationalisation of absentee landowners also gave rise to the formation of large agricultural cooperatives, among them, in particular the production cooperatives of the agrarian revolution (*Capra*) which would only finally be wound up in the early 1980s, while the nationalised land would be restored to its owners.

This land distribution in the SEMC, when it occurred, was also accompanied by a policy of land conquest in which water was a decisive factor. The Moroccan target of one million hectares under irrigation was achieved in 1980, while on the eastern shore, Egypt and Syria embarked on a policy of land improvement after the political revolutions of the 1950s and 1960s. With the construction of huge dams (Aswan in Egypt and the Tabqa dam in Syria), these two countries considerably added to their potential irrigated areas, both by bringing water to new lands (horizontal expansion) and by doubling, and even tripling, crops (vertical expansion). To accompany these land and water policies, SEMC provided strong support for inputs and food products, so as simultaneously to enhance productivity of farms and deliver social peace by a supply of cheap food.

These strongly interventionist policies marked time in the early 1980s. Subject to the demands of economic and financial adjustment under pressure from international organisations (International Monetary Fund and World Bank), the majority of SEMC had to review their agricultural policies in depth. The decade of the 1980s was marked by liberal reforms placing the process of privatisation of service activities (marketing, supply) and reduction of direct aid to production or consumption at the core of agricultural policy. In some countries (Tunisia, Turkey, Algeria and Egypt), certain subsidies (for staple goods, for example, or factors of productivity) were nevertheless maintained in order to deal with a particularly difficult political situation and satisfy the demands of certain categories of farmer (interest rate discounts, equipment subsidies) or urbanised populations. This did not prevent the increased pace at which the economies and markets of the SEMC opened up to the outside world, giving rise to strong concerns in the face of abrupt and often ill-prepared liberalisation.

In this context, the improvement in the performance of irrigated agriculture and security of food supply to towns are the principal lines of agricultural policies put in place in the majority of SEMC. The development strategies currently adopted are based on the following pillars:

- *The solving of problems of a structural nature linked to the size of farms, the status of agricultural land and the use of natural resources.* In Algeria, access to agricultural land involves clarification of the status of agricultural land. In legal terms, it means in particular defining new rules governing, firstly, the operation of *melk* (privately-owned land), in order to regulate the problems caused by joint ownership and, secondly, operation of *wafks* (lands belonging to religious foundations) and their inclusion in the economic sphere. The authorities are also trying to enhance the status of farmers so as to guarantee the rights of tenants and owners, to promote the use of rural leases to

protect both and to encourage the circulation of assets to allow revitalisation of certain rural areas where small privately owned land predominates. Everywhere in the Maghreb, the mutualisation of the means of production is organised by strengthening agricultural cooperation and promoting farmers' groups.

- *The policy of mobilisation and rational management of water and hydro-agricultural improvements justified by the aridity of the climate and the irregularity of rainfall.* In this sphere, Tunisia has launched numerous water and soil conservation works, the most noteworthy of which are the *meskats* of the Sahel (development of basins to collect surface water run-off), the *jessours* of the Matmata Mountains (small dykes in ravines to collect water and soil upstream for agriculture) and *m'gouds* (works for harvesting and irrigating with flood water) in the Kairouan plain. These traditional works are generally built and managed by the farmers themselves. The network of interconnected dams in the North of Tunisia is intended to regulate water resources, and the water mobilisation strategy after 2010 will be based on the use of non-conventional water sources (drainage water, waste water, desalinated sea water). In Morocco, the national irrigation programme envisages a major hydro scheme to extend irrigation in several areas (Doukkala, Gharb, Loukkos, for example) and small and medium-sized schemes to extend irrigation in smaller areas as well as the refurbishing of traditional areas. The projects for exploiting land in *bour* (dry) zones are based on improved irrigation, equipment and basic services, agricultural development actions, etc. Under the programme, it is planned to implement 71 projects covering a total area of 1.1 million hectares.
- *Improvement of land in arid and semi-arid zones and "renewal" programmes designed to increase employment and the incomes of farmers and rural communities by developments (plantations, irrigation) and better farming methods.* The countries of the South (from Morocco to Egypt) have been engaged for a decade in programmes to combat the effects of drought and aridity. In the Maghreb, management of climate risk over the vast expanses of steppe and pasture rely on a combination of cereal crops and livestock, food supplements purchased from the sale of animals, resources drawn from emigration and agriculture using irrigation from pumps. While none of these solutions offers characteristics of sustainability that are beyond dispute,¹ the last has developed very rapidly, especially in all the regions of North Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), but is now encountering serious limits due to the sometimes rapid depletion of the water source (salinisation, fall in the water table). As the cost of pumping and irrigation becomes prohibitive, there is a risk of a selection operating between those who are able to master the use of the resource (through irrigation with a higher capital investment) and those who have to abandon this option which may well have played its part for several decades. Morocco recently adopted new programmes to combat the effects of drought which are distinguished from their predecessors by their scale and design. The approaches are based on management of the risk by means of more flexible financial instruments and decentralised methods. In the context of protection of vulnerable areas, a policy for mountain areas (which in Morocco cover over

1 - The first does not provide every guarantee if the drought lasts more than a year. The second is closely linked to a prices policy in an environment which, in the long run, leads to a rise in cereal prices. The third is socially and economically untenable in the long run. The last is based on replenishment of the water table which is unlikely.

a quarter of the country) has also been introduced. In Algeria, a renewal programme is encouraging the development of rustic arboriculture. Reforestation sites have been opened (in particular in the framework of the rural employment programme) in order to improve the ratio of forest cover in the country.

- *Strengthening research, publicity and vocational training in agriculture, based on full modernisation and improvement of performance in the sector.* The introduction of study and research networks on rural development is on the agenda of all the countries of the South. Projects to enhance intellectual skills and scientific and technical potential must “provide a prompt tailor-made response to needs and enlighten the actions of companies” (Secretariat of Rural Development, 2004). Morocco has set an objective of developing an inter-university study and research network on rural development “to provide a better understanding of the rural environment and the processes involved in the transformation of rural societies, to capitalise better on experience, measures and methods used on the ground, and better to articulate information/training programmes and mobilisation of those involved in rural development” (Secretariat of Rural Development, 2004).

The financial resources allocated in the framework of agricultural policies, however, are still insufficiently and unequally distributed. They represent less than 10% of total public investment while contributing enormously to employment in many SEMC (over a quarter of the active population in Egypt, Morocco and Turkey), to exports (Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey and Egypt) and to wealth creation, as growth in GDP is closely linked to that of the agricultural sector (especially in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt). Moreover, efforts advocated in strategic documents do not always lead to actions to match the high ambitions announced. However, these two observations do not seem to apply to Algeria, which again invested in agricultural policy at the end of the 20th century.

Algeria's national agricultural development plan

The chronic food deficit led the authorities to develop a national agricultural development programme (PNDA) starting in 2000. The new agricultural programme does not break with the liberalised economic framework defined in the early 1980s, but its approaches converge essentially on the objectives of renewal of agricultural lands. It is part of a *rehabilitation of the regulatory functions of the State* and re-launches the process of investment interrupted in 1986. Although the approaches contained in the agricultural programme reflect socio-economic and technical needs (improving Algeria's agricultural competitiveness, increasing production and yields), the principal operations defined in it have the objective of renewing agricultural lands, protection of fragile ecosystems and improvement of cultivable land. They are based on agro-climatic constraints the effects of which had long been ignored.

The agricultural programme sets out large scale actions. The objective of renewal of land, which is the largest operation since it covers over 3 million hectares (740,000 hectares in the first phase), is to concentrate cereal production in so-called favourable zones (1.2 million hectares) and, in dry and arid regions, rustic arboriculture, wine-growing and small-scale livestock farming.

The development of branches (cereals, milk, potatoes, forestry), another component of the PNDA is intended to multiply crop yields and labour productivity in the coming

years. Improvement measures involving grants of land to farmers or private investors are defined for mountain areas, mountain forelands, steppes and Saharan zones. Lastly, the national reforestation programme concerns 1.2 million hectares (to increase the ratio of forest in North Algeria from 11% to 14%).

The final objective set for these actions as a whole is to reconfigure the agricultural territory inherited from the colonial era, which discriminated between a useful agricultural Algeria and the rest, which was not suited to the changes in the country over the last forty years, and to improve farmers' incomes through financial subsidies (for growing wheat, irrigation, planting, improvement, use of assets to encourage intensification...).

Some essential questions are still pending. In particular, problems of land ownership and organisation of agrarian structures persist. The liberal agricultural reforms have not provided viable solutions in this area. The demographic trends, the doubts raised about the 1971 agrarian reform, combined with the absence of an overall development strategy (and industrialisation), have forced country areas in recent years to maintain a growing population, thereby aggravating further the state of the agrarian structures. Surveys show that over 80% of farms have less than 10 hectares and that the average area is 4.7 hectares. These agrarian structures, dominated by small farms, once again raise the question of the need to diversify agricultural activities and employment (other than agriculture) to improve income levels. They revive the demand for land reform to improve the land allocations and/or capital of farmers who are under-resourced. Finally, they raise the problem of access to and dissemination of technical progress in small and medium-sized family farms in order to increase their labour productivity.

Uncertainties remain to be removed to guarantee the future of Algerian agriculture. As regards the place of agronomic research, the financial resources mobilised up to now, like the means of organisation of research, have not always allowed accumulation, let alone capitalisation, of research aimed at sustainable agricultural development. The essential technical references to remove the barriers which stand in the way of increased land productivity are not rigorously defined, whether in the zones concerned by renewal of crops or those involved in actions to intensify cereal cultivation. In the last resort, new economic and social paradigms need to be mobilised. The objectives related to renewal of the territory and the conceptions of sustainable development, essentially long-term, which underpin the PNDA often clash with the short-term strategies dictated by the laws of the market and the pursuit of immediate profit. The objectives of agricultural production must be brought into line with the essential need to recover lands and preserve the land capital.

Source: Besaoud (2002).

In the North of the Mediterranean: the pursuit of quality over quantity

While in the South of the Mediterranean, States are the principal actors in agricultural policies, those of the North have shifted part of their agricultural policy to the supranational level, i.e. Community level. Since the Treaty of Rome (1957), market policy has been devolved to European level, while structural policy is rather left to States. Thus France, in 1960 and then in 1962 established guideline laws the purpose of which was to form family farms able to provide a decent income to their members and engage in a process of modernisation.

At European level, the "productivist" CAP of the 1960-1970s, set on the path of modernisation and the pursuit of productivity in the framework of strong price guarantees and

external protection regimes based on community preference, ensured the Community's agro-food supply. Its success even surpassed expectations because, from the mid-1970s, Europe became self-sufficient in the majority of staple products (meat, milk, cereals, sugar). Parallel to this, the shift of the agricultural population to other sectors of activity continued willingly or grudgingly. In some countries, such as France, Germany and Italy, the agro-food industry achieved take-off and is now among the world leaders in this area.

Despite all these wholly positive aspects, the CAP also had perverse effects: major disparities between territories and types of farming, surpluses to be sold in external markets or destroyed, growing budget expenditure and worrying environmental impacts. Since 1992, European agricultural policies have been undergoing a clear re-orientation. The internal situation marked by high Community surpluses and ever more massive expenditure on subsidies and intervention forced the European Union (EU) to review the policy. This change in subsidy policies became all the more necessary when the inclusion of agriculture in the GATT round which opened in 1986 put market policies in the firing line of criticism. This criticism came from the United States which saw itself challenged in its trade supremacy by a conquering Europe. It also came from the Cairns Group of fair traders in a market facing calls to liberalise.

In the new CAP, improving the competitiveness of European agriculture was an important component. The reduction in guaranteed prices designed to facilitate opening to trade was offset by direct aid to farmers calculated on the basis of past benchmarks and more compatible with the rules laid down by the World Trade Organization (WTO) which prohibited all subsidies to production. The EU also had to de-link aid almost entirely in order to conform to international trade rules. While this competitiveness should allow higher quality products, conquest of global markets and diversification of activities and products, it also seeks to anchor it more firmly in areas where employment or use of rural areas have become recurrent concerns. In the new orientations of the CAP, the major goal is to intervene in anything which can lead to the development of viable agricultural or related activities in socially acceptable conditions and, in some cases, strengthening the existing major infrastructure.

The reform process gradually resulted in a more "qualitative" CAP which attempts to respond to the demands of European consumers and citizens who certainly experienced several food crises in the late 1990s (dioxin, mad cow disease). In this context, it seeks to give priority to food quality (sanitary conditions, diversification of products and protection of origin), incorporate environmental concerns by encouraging both sensible agricultural practices also based on the notion of the multipurpose nature of agricultural and the countryside. An important element of the reformed CAP concerns improvement of the quality of life and diversification of the rural economy through actions to support enterprise creation, development of the natural, cultural, historical and religious heritage, development of tourism and improvement of rural services.

Poverty in the countryside: a Mediterranean scourge

Even if forms of urban poverty are developing worryingly in the SEMC, the phenomenon is still concentrated in rural areas, related to traditional and subsistence agriculture. While neither agrarian reforms, when applied, nor interventionist policies had really

taken agricultural populations out of poverty, the structural adjustment plans imposed from the 1980s onwards only added to it, along with unemployment, exclusion and social precariousness. By imposing a policy of budgetary restrictions which mostly affected social spending and public redistribution policies, these plans contributed to a reduction in investment in agriculture and agro-industry, and thus to worsen the fate of rural areas. In the Maghreb today, two thirds of the poor population live in the countryside. A major gulf separates the urban from the rural world, landlocked and under-equipped in terms of basic infrastructure and socio-educational facilities. These inequalities in access to resources (and thus in their geographical distribution) condemn large parts of the rural population (women more than men) to poverty, and even more persistently in mountain areas. The crises in agricultural and livestock production, caused by climatic or economic shocks, accentuate this poverty and food insecurity for communities.

The objectives of combating poverty (like the development of human capital) are today the primary strategic pillar of rural development policies in the South Mediterranean, along the lines of the royal human development initiative in Morocco. Implementation of these policies takes the form of specific rural equipment actions (education, literacy, health, drinking water supply programmes, rural electrification, connection to the drainage network, etc.) and improvement of the rural environment. Although programmes for the diversification of economic activities in the rural world are also implemented in order to improve conditions of employment and incomes of rural communities, the dynamic of the application of the various programmes varies considerably, and the results often fall short of the objectives set.

The challenge of balanced development in Lebanon

During a lecture he gave in April 2003, the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Selim Hoss, deplored the perpetuation of an unbalanced development despite the repeated pronouncements of many political leaders on the need for harmonious distribution of economic activity in Lebanon. The challenge, of course, is a social one, as it is necessary to allow access to services which offer the fairest possible solution for communities wherever they live. It is also geographical, since it involves both avoiding the saturation of urban centres, especially Beirut, and preventing devitalisation, or indeed desertification, of the periphery. This contrast between centre and periphery is scarcely specific to Lebanon, and all countries face this dual challenge to a greater or lesser degree. A third challenge is added to the mix when it comes to Lebanon: balanced development is an instrument to combat denominationalism in its negative sense, i.e. a situation where belonging to the community impedes or even prevents the sense of belonging to the republic, with all that implies in terms of tensions and rivalries. As Selim Hoss said in his lecture, some regions of Lebanon have a dominant denominational colour. When they suffer from under-development and poverty, these two characteristics then take on a denominational hue which ultimately further entrenches denominationalism in the country. Promoting comprehensive development, therefore, means forestalling community reactions which pose a threat to civil peace.

Source: Blanc (2006).

The rural areas of the North Mediterranean also have pockets of poverty, but these are mainly concentrated in the agricultural environment. It chiefly involves households composed of elderly farmers working in small farms or rural dwellers living in remote areas

hardly affected by the development of industrial activities, services and rural tourism. These zones at high risk of abandonment have not even seen any real agricultural development, which has helped to prolong a situation of isolation and under-resourcing in terms of basic services. In order to reduce these pockets of social poverty, in 2006 the European Commission set out in its strategic orientations approaches aimed at ensuring social cohesion and geographical equity. While at the beginning of the European adventure and for almost three decades, the CAP was the principal instrument of rural development, it has since become an integral part of regional policy. One of the approaches defined in the strategies of the EU countries strengthens measures to offset natural handicaps and maintain activities in mountain and highland areas in the Mediterranean regions. At this level, the role of the various very early attempts in these zones (essentially the mountains policy) to draw up efficient development policies is exemplary.

The rural development policy in Europe is the legacy of a policy which, from the outset, sought to solve the structural problems of the productive sector, then progressively to support the multiple functions played by agriculture and explicitly recognised by society. It tends to be integrated increasingly in the framework of a broader rural world itself reintegrated in the overall economic and social dynamic and making a full contribution to this dynamic.

Regional policy in Europe, an effective means of redistribution

With the Single Act of 1985, which envisaged the single market for 1993, Europe put in place a regional policy designed to fill the interregional gaps. The principles of this policy were drawn up in 1989. It now represents one third of the EU's budget (agriculture accounting for some 40%) and has three funds which are real economic levers (two of which have changed name since 2005):

- The EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund) Guidance section which contributes to improvement of agricultural and agro-industrial structures and rural development;
- The ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), designed to correct regional imbalances and to contribute to development in the least prosperous regions;
- The ESF (European Social Fund) whose mission is to intervene in employment, vocation training and insertion.

These funds are linked by their objectives, geographically or otherwise. Prior to 2000, only objectives 1, 2 and 5 involved zoning, the others, objectives 3 and 4, being cross-cutting. Rural development concerned only objective 1 and objective 5b. Zones classified in objective 1 often included regions known as lagging behind in development, which mobilised the three funds on the basis of the general character of their problems: most of Spain, southern Italy and the whole of Portugal. Rural zones classified in objective 5b were disadvantaged and also mobilised the three funds.

From 2000 to 2006, objectives 5b and 2 (renewal of industrial regions in decline) were combined in a single objective 2, while objective 1 continued as defined previously. Alongside these regional development programmes, Europe implemented programmes of Community initiatives, in particular the Leader Rural Development programme. Based on the construction of local projects by local actors, they have proved increasingly successful (Leader 1 in 1991, Leader 2 in 1994, Leader + in 2000). The EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) was set up on 21 June 2005 (Regulation 1290/2005). It finances Pillar 2 of the CAP, while the EAGF (European Agricultural Guarantee Fund) replaced the EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund) for Pillar 1, i.e. market policy.

The forms of intervention of the EAFRD, defined by Regulation 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005, are organised according to three objectives:

- to improve the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry by support to restructuring, development and innovation;
- to improve the rural environment by support to land management;
- to improve the quality of life in rural areas and promote diversification of economic activities.

Alongside these three thematic components, a fourth cross-cutting component takes up the Leader approach.

Tackling the challenge of sustainability

The protection of natural resources is another priority theme of the new multi-dimensional and geographical concept of rural development which has emerged in the last few years. Bearing in mind its social and economic role, agriculture has exploited natural resources (water and soil chiefly) increasingly unsustainably, placing the agricultural sector at the heart of the environmental debate in the Mediterranean. The economic and social fragility of rural areas is identified as one of the major causes of the degradation of natural resources. This degradation, sometimes irreversible, in turn imposes strict constraints on the economic and social development of rural communities.

Faced with limited availability (close to exploitation ceilings) and the serious degradation of natural resources, essential to rural development and food security, most SEMC in recent years have witnessed the introduction of a legal and institutional framework, the objective of which is better management of resources and solutions to environmental problems. Action plans or programmes aimed at limiting the degradation of forests, or integrating forests in the dynamic of rural development, programmes to improve roads, and national programmes to combat desertification (NAPCD) have been adopted in all the countries.

Tunisia: the national action plan to combat desertification (NAPCD)

The NAPCD is intended to combat desertification and alleviate drought in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-arid areas, thanks to measures to protect resources and development based on improving productivity of land and conditions of life of the rural communities concerned. It involves an integrated and participatory approach, relying on partnership and cooperation between the authorities, local communities, farmers, professional organisations and NGOs.

The programme concerns the socio-agro-ecological zones of the Tell and Dorsal in the North, the High Steppe and Low Steppe in the centre and the Jeffara, the zone of the Saharan Atlas ranges, the Shotts, the Mahatma, Dehar and Erg in southern Tunisia. The formulation of regional master plans gives pride of place to community participation. Instead of creating new structures, the mission of the NAPCD is to exploit the existing network of associations and professional groups already present in the country: local authorities, community interest groups in the water and forestry and pastoral sectors and NGOs.

Despite its translation into law, this awareness is rarely followed by effective policies and concrete actions. Where they exist, the most significant programmes are often externally financed (e.g. the MEDA programme from 1995 to 2006) and are often imple-

mented in collaboration with international organisations (EU, World Bank) or NGOs heavily subsidised from abroad. Despite appreciable progress in some countries (Morocco and Algeria) and certain ecological areas, policies on the conservation of natural resources are still inadequate in terms of financing and implementation.

In the North Mediterranean, realisation of the negative effects of the CAP on the environment has been reflected in the inclusion of environmental measures in successive reforms (agro-environmental measures, eco-conditionality, etc.) but the level of introduction of available mechanisms still varies enormously and is highly dependent on the capacities of the responsible central or local authorities. The second Community rural development strategic guidelines defined in 2006 extend and strengthen sustainable management of natural environments and rural areas by introducing new agro-environmental measures for the period 2007-2013. From now on, farmers are regarded and legitimised both as producers of public assets (biodiversity, countryside, territory occupied intermeshed in a managed way that is as regular as possible, etc.) for the benefit of society.

The emergence of local actors in rural governance

Globalisation and the opening of markets modify the relationship between the State and civil society and thus exert an influence on modes of governance. Whatever the region of the Mediterranean (North, South or East), the acceleration of these processes is accompanied by institutional and organisational change. The central role of the State has been called into question and there has been an attempt to promote modes of governance which grants a growing role to decentralised institutions and different forms of professional organisations, associations and community groups, especially in rural development. In the South, this trend coincides with a certain contraction of the State induced by the implementation of structural adjustment plans. In the North, it stems more from the processes of regionalisation and administrative decentralisation (France, Italy, Spain).

Weaknesses and problems in the organisation of the rural world in the South Mediterranean

Some local authorities have been created in many South and East Mediterranean countries, but their responsibilities remain poorly defined in relation to the State. More generally, some States are still faced with a dual constraint: pushing forward with the process of decentralisation while maintaining the administrative fabric of the country, in particular in landlocked rural areas. The fact is that administrative structures and public services are polarised and concentrated in those areas the most favoured from the point of view of their production and growth potential. The deficit in communications and transport infrastructure, the lack of interdependency regions, segmentation of circuits, asymmetric economic flows and the absence of a stimulating environment lie at the back of the institutional deficits of the poorest regions.

Political reforms liberalising the public sphere and facilitating the creation of associations have led to a burgeoning of community initiatives which have enriched the organisational fabric of countries such as Turkey, Morocco and Algeria. Professional associations were

created spontaneously after the disappearance of the agricultural cooperatives. Agricultural and rural organisations (including informal arrangements such as village assemblies) took the place of the former State institutions. The withdrawal of the State and the reduction of its role at local level also had the effect of strengthening demand for new institutions (chambers of agriculture, professional organisations, agricultural unions, etc.) which progressively replaced the traditional and customary organisations.

The extension of trade relations encouraged the development of commercial agricultural businesses, generating at a stroke the emergence of a class of powerful individuals whose interests are turned outwards and who saw the customary rules as merely a brake on their expansion. The emergence of civil society is a long and complex process which depends on the state of development of trade relations in rural areas. The truth is that the breaks with tradition are sometimes formal. The bonds of regional or family, clan or religious ties are the forces which are still the basis of the functioning of rural communities in the South Mediterranean,² and even on the northern shore, as in the southern regions of Italy. The development of this agricultural and rural civil society in the SEMC has often been the fruit of aid from one or more international institutions. The financing of large scale rural development projects in Turkey or Lebanon, for example, was accompanied by the creation of producers' organisations. In Egypt, the Governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Gulf States generously support fundamentalist movements, associations and NGOs, including in rural areas. The partnership with foreign institutions and NGOs is also considered to be one of the principal gains of rural associations in the South. In addition to their material contribution, it often allowed them to acquire a credible image and use it in their negotiations with State institutions, rural communes or provincial authorities.

Professional associations in some countries of the South

Morocco has 250 producers' associations and groups. 37 agricultural chambers and 6,000 cooperatives were counted in 2006. In Algeria, agricultural professionals are grouped into 48 chambers of agriculture, 1,300 professional associations and over 800 service cooperatives. In Egypt, there were 5,717 cooperatives with 4 million members in 2002 with a turnover estimated at 25 billion Egyptian pounds, the equivalent of 4 billion euros. These cooperative support production and provide marketing of agricultural products, but encounter difficulties related to the redefinition of their role in the new context of liberalisation, disengagement of the State and structural adjustment. In Lebanon, there are four types of agricultural professional organisation: cooperatives, farmers' unions, farmers' federations and associations. Their creation is subject to grants awarded by international organisations and aid received from the Lebanese Government.

While the organisational renaissance of the rural world is most often institutionally driven, new agricultural and rural organisations are sometimes the product of sectoral initiatives (water management, farm or organic products...). The creation of associations then seeks to achieve objectives centred on the needs of communities or to find a specific niche in local development. The emergence of rural organisations is also particularly favoured by the appearance of new elites (young graduates from the rural

2 - For example, in Egypt where the agricultural and rural organisations which emerged in the new rural communities established on newly developed land (*The New Lands*) are often controlled by the Muslim Brothers organisation.

environment). Certain rural areas, notably in the Maghreb and Egypt, have benefited from the establishment of a network of high schools or university institutions recruiting their students from the interior of these countries. The return of young graduates to their place of origin contributes to strengthening the human potential of these areas. However, a certain number of obstacles put a brake on the development of agricultural and rural organisations in the SEMC:

- In the great majority of these countries, the legal texts define the boundaries between the State and civil society organisations poorly. The rules which have been defined often place agricultural professional organisations under the supervision of local administrations, thus limiting their autonomy and capacity for intervention.
- These rural associations and organisations are often subject to the question of legitimacy. They must win the recognition of members or the local population in order to pursue collective action. The organisations are not invited as partners in the conception of development programmes and the exchanges are essentially vertical. They also have to deal with the inflexibility of the public administration due to the fact that the process of decentralisation is incomplete.
- Local or national organisations suffer from strong financial pressure. They must constantly work to avoid financial penalties which would cause their disappearance.
- The training and information deficit of grass-roots actors is a further constraint which limits the capacity to mobilise human capital in general. This deficit has consequences for the exercise of collective or individual responsibilities.

When farmers from both shores cooperate

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) is the world farmers' organisation. It has observer status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council. In this framework, a Mediterranean committee has been set up to enable farmers on both shores to work together at three levels: lobbying in European bodies; a platform for exchange of ideas and experiences of farmers of the region on questions which affect them directly; stimulation of technical cooperation between the member organisations and also with certain IFAP partners such as international organisations, research institutes and agricultural cooperation and development agencies.

A structured and diversified rural world in the North

In the countries of the northern shore, the agricultural profession has long been organised in unions, cooperatives and chambers of agriculture. In France, it is this highly organised profession which has negotiated all the national reforms since 1960. Since the decade of the 1990s, the promotion of rural development has contributed to the flourishing of new actors and the establishment of new partnerships. Community rural policies and the institutional changes which accompanied them have had important effects on the general organisation of these actors, by encouraging the emergence of new associations and helping to create a climate more favourable to the development of relations between actors. The principles governing the Community Leader initiative

(Links between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy, launched in 1991), now Leader + (2000-2006) give priority to a geographical approach characterised by bottom-up measures. This has led to the constitution of networks within which different rationales are harmonised in common development actions.

With the Leader programmes, the participation and organisation of local actors seems to have been strengthened. The majority of associations have realised that their activities or the contribution that they hope to make to the development of the area must necessarily be part of a perspective of collaboration and partnership with other local actors. Even if some partnerships are merely financial or information flows, this type of relationship is more and more frequently envisaged as a common definition of objectives, tasks and responsibilities. In this case, there is a move towards common administration of local rural development programmes encouraging the development of a project culture (the rationale of the project in place of the shop-window).

Through the implementation of development projects, many agricultural and rural organisations today are recognised as legitimate partners by local rural society or by public institutions (local communities, local government...). The improvement and development of the area are also the subject of policies of the EU, States, regions and departments, but now characterised by a great variety of procedures. The result is a degree of complexity and profusion of institutions, a source of problems of coordination and cohesion of actions among the various development actors. The “institutional clutter”, the “profusion of mechanisms” and the “juxtaposition of areas of intervention” (intercommunal territories, Leader territory, areas, natural parks...) often hampers initiatives.

The Community Strategic Guidelines on Rural Development for the programming period 2007-2013 now call for a consolidation of the Leader approach (European Council, 2005 and 2006). The European Commission wants to pursue territorial projects with broad participation of local actors and a representative public-private partnership. Rural organisations are invited to take charge of the development of their territory, but adding their contribution in fields as varied as new technology, environment, employment promotion, promotion of women and the cultural heritage. The supply of commercial and non-commercial goods and services and creation of jobs and activities that they should encourage is intended, firstly, to attract new populations and, secondly, to improve the autonomy of the rural world in relation to the urban.

The environmental question at the heart of Mediterranean co-operation

Although local actors are now well represented in rural governance, there is also a growing contribution at supranational level. For a long time, the future of agriculture and rural life in the North has been as much a concern of Europe as a whole as its constituent States. What is new, however, is the introduction of these sectors into the partnership which is being woven between the shores of the Mediterranean. In Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the question of integration of agricultural markets, which has been going on since 2003, appears to be crucial. Less well known yet already very real, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership also serves as a framework for environmental issues.

Since the 1970s, environmental awareness has been growing perceptibly in the world and in the Mediterranean especially. It is during the last decade that environment has become a subject of international policy (Lerin and Tubiana, 2005-2006). Following the first World Environment Conference in Stockholm (5-6 June 1972), which set up the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in 1975, the countries bordering the Mediterranean and the European Community launched a Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). This Plan was accompanied by an important legal instrument, the Barcelona Convention, which seeks to ensure the protection of the Mediterranean lands. It also led to the creation of the Blue Plan, established in the South of France in 1979, a think tank concerning the future of the Mediterranean environment.

In 1992, the Rio Conference, the first World Summit on Environment and Development drew attention to the unsustainable character of the current planetary trends and entered into a commitment to act by setting out a programme, Agenda 21. The concept of sustainable development, put forward in 1997 in the Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, was then popularised. Its message is simple: satisfy the needs of current generations without compromising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs. In 1995, stimulated by the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), a Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) was set up under the UNEP-MAP. Since then, several Mediterranean countries have created their national observatory of environment and sustainable development.

In 2002, in Johannesburg, the Second World Summit on Sustainable Development placed the emphasis on the need to change our patterns of consumption and production while stressing protection and sustainable management of natural resources. It renewed the commitments made in 2000 by the international community through the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). This marked a turning point, crossing the threshold from awareness to a manifest will to act. The decision to draw up a strategic document for sustainable development in the Mediterranean was approved at the Second Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment in July 2002, following the Helsinki Conference in November 1997. At the same time, the Arab countries focussed their efforts on the occasion of the Johannesburg Summit on the presentation of a sustainable development initiative and action plan adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE). In June 2005, in Athens, the UNEP-MAP presented the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), a strategic text which proposes engaging dynamic and virtuous cooperation in the region between the coastal countries “for environmental sustainability and shared prosperity” (UNEP, 2005). This strategy has four major objectives with the aim of promoting progress towards sustainability in the economic, social and environmental areas: to contribute to economic development by enhancing Mediterranean assets; to reduce social disparities by implementing the Millennium Development Goals and strengthen cultural identities; to change unsustainable production and consumption patterns; and to improve governance at the local, national and regional levels. To attain these objectives, the MSSD recommends action in seven priority fields of action, which are increasingly interdependent today:

- better management of water resources and demand;
- improved rational use of energy, increased renewable energy use and mitigation of and adaptation to climate change;

- sustainable mobility through appropriate transport management;
- sustainable tourism as a leading economic sector;
- sustainable agriculture and rural development;
- sustainable urban development; and
- sustainable management of the sea, coastal areas and marine resources.

These seven fields of action are both the most threatened by unsustainable trends and the most strategic in economic and social terms. The MSSD has set itself up since its creation as a reference framework for all governments and actors in the Mediterranean world. If acknowledging this “environmental debt” is primarily incumbent on the countries of the northern shore, placing the question of sustainable development at the top of the Mediterranean agenda is not only necessary to preserve the region’s future but is also a strong signal to intensify Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in concrete terms. The political framework provided by the EMP since 1995 has served to launch initiatives in this field. The European Union has financed numerous environmental projects through the MEDA programme, a Community financial instrument in support of the EMP. In 1997, in Helsinki, the Euro-Mediterranean environment ministers adopted a declaration establishing the Short and Medium-Term Priority Environmental Action Programme (SMAP), which engendered three generations of projects up to 2005 (SMAP 1 in 1998-1999, SMAP 2 in 2000 and SMAP 3 in 2005). This aid was complemented by the extension of certain activities to the European Environment Agency through the LIFE-third country programme. At the same time, the action of the European Investment Bank (EIB) with regard to the Mediterranean Basin led to the granting of several loans for the installation of environmental infrastructure, such as the Tangiers wind farm in Morocco. The EU has also worked with the World Bank, whose activities in the South Mediterranean include a strong environmental component, illustrated by the METAP project (Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Program).

The METAP programme

Founded in 1990, the Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Program (METAP) is a partnership involving countries of the Mediterranean Basin and multi-lateral donors to assist the beneficiary countries in preparing projects and building their capacity in regional environmental management. The initial partnership consisting of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the World Bank (WB) was enlarged to include the European Commission (EC), the Development Cooperation Agency in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (Finnida), the Development Cooperation Directorate (DCD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which are the chief donors. Its mission is to build the region’s capacity to develop and adopt sound environmental policies with special emphasis on the following fields: policy and legislative instruments, water quality, management of waste water and coastal areas, management of municipal waste and hazardous waste. The successes of the METAP programme, shared with UNEP-MAP, include the entry into force in 2004 of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention as amended). The beneficiary member countries of the METAP are currently Albania, Algeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the Palestinian Territories.

For further information, consult the website www.metap.org

The environment seems to be one of the chief priorities of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the framework of the new European Neighbourhood Project (ENP), which is based on the mutual commitment of the EU and its neighbouring States to defend common values, including the principles of sustainable development. This approach is set out clearly in the framework paper of the European Commission of May 2004 (European Commission, 2004). The environmental challenge was recalled at the tenth anniversary of the ENP in Barcelona on 28 November 2005. The work programme drawn up by the 35 member countries of the process envisaged concrete measures, among them the objective of de-polluting the Mediterranean by 2020. This ambition was officially confirmed on 5 September 2006 by a communication of the Commission proposing the progressive decontamination of the Mediterranean Sea, the so-called Horizon 2020 initiative.³ The Commission is currently seeking to form a coalition of partners responsible for implementing the initiative with a first phase 2007-2013, which corresponds to the next budget period of the Union and thus of the new financial instrument dedicated to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)/European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The complete modalities and actors of the programme were approved at the third Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Cairo on 20 November 2006. During the conference, the European Commission was invited to coordinate the partnership of the initiative by setting up an effective steering group made up of key representatives of Euro-Mediterranean governments and other partners. The group will be generally responsible for the conduct of Horizon 2020, review and monitoring, and effective coordination with other related initiatives, in particular, through the strategic action programme to address pollution from land-based activities in the Mediterranean region.

The contrasting reality and outlook for the Mediterranean rural world

It is clear from this analysis that agriculture is no longer considered to be the sole engine of rural development. New sectors of activity (industry and services) are contributing to the promotion of rural areas, employment, growing wealth and development of natural resources and assets. In the North Mediterranean countries, agricultural development, linked to agricultural specialisation in rural areas, is no longer enough to sustain these areas, some of which, in any case, have been marginalised by the modernisation of agriculture. The pursuit of competitiveness is leading each of these rural areas to envisage developing their capacities for innovation and adaptation to globalisation. These rural areas are a necessary dimension in achieving this objective. In the North as in the South of the Mediterranean, the process of efficient, fair and sustainable local development comes from strategies of strengthening economic amenities, social cohesion and improvement of the living standards of rural communities.

For the North Mediterranean, rural development policies are largely the product of modernisation of agriculture and have the objectives of social cohesion, renewal of these areas and local development. For the countries of the southern shore, the future of rural areas is conditioned by the need to improve living conditions and combat poverty.

3 - See Press Release "The Commission proposes an environmental strategy to protect the Mediterranean Sea", IP/06/1155, Brussels, 6 September 2005.

Sustainable management of natural resources and the involvement of local actors in exploiting local resources are another strategic dimension for the future of the Mediterranean rural world, alongside defence of rurality, protection of the heritage, capital and cultural values. Rural regions have specific resources, goods and services: landscapes, historical, architectural, religious and cultural heritage are all elements which can be mobilised to affirm local differences and specialities in the face of the standardisation of cultures. This phenomenon is emerging as a powerful force in many Mediterranean countries and could be an advantage if properly managed in the future.

Concerning modes of rural governance, several phenomena are emerging. New elites are making their appearance in rural regions. Young graduates from the rural environment, and urban citizens or civil servants are renewing contacts with the rural world, investing their knowledge, social or physical capital to the benefit of their community, region or locality. While the Leader programmes in Europe have helped to redistribute skills and human resources, the institutional drives in the South have encouraged initiatives by local activities or citizens, albeit sometimes opportunist in economic terms. Agricultural and rural organisations have served as a breeding ground for recruitment of a new political elite and/or candidates for local, regional or national elections. In the current configuration of the development of these organisations in the Mediterranean, local authorities are seeking to take full advantage of the local fabric of associations. For some, associations are a factor in improving the performance of the local authority. Others see them as a factor in learning about local democracy. The change in relations between the State and civil society, the transfer of responsibilities and powers to local authorities in the North is ushering in “the era of the expert” at local level. The quality of interventions in rural communes requires development of a project culture, and the ability to manage them (in terms of identification, implementation and evaluation) or mastering the administrative and financial procedures. The competitiveness of rural areas will be closely linked to their capacity for innovation, to adjust to an increasingly complex environment and to adopt new technologies.

Organisational dynamism is often linked to the expression of new local configurations. This is particularly the case of organisations that support Community programmes (in France, Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal) or local development associations formed to exercise citizenship and participation in the process of change and local development. These rural organisations, which are quite large, form genuine networks, either on a formal basis (partnerships) or informal (exchange of information and experience, for example). Both North and South of the Mediterranean, they constitute highly effective partners for other development actors. They often try to preserve their independence in relation to institutions which are tempted (in a context of political competition imposed on them by these citizens’ rural organisation) to regulate them or control them politically.

In the future, however, the great challenges of rural governance take on a different aspect from one shore of the Mediterranean to the other:

- For the South and East Mediterranean countries, it is essential to ensure the transition from an agriculture (and an agro-food sector), which is protected and underperforming, to a more competitive agriculture open to the global market, with an acceptable political, social and ecological cost (Akesbi, 2006). Simulations of the

effects of multilateral trade liberalisation show contrasting effects from one country to another. While in international forums countries like Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey demand liberalisation of international trade in agriculture and the opening of European markets, net importing countries such as Algeria, which have not managed to integrate themselves in world trade to a significant extent, would have little to gain. The competitiveness of agriculture in the countries of the South is poor, and greater liberalisation of the agricultural sector would lead to a reallocation of highly scarce resources (know-how, irrigation water...) to export branches, thus creating a gap between traditional, agriculture or import substitution branches. Producers' incomes have tended to fall due to the low level of public subsidy, inflation and declining exchange rates. Agricultural and rural policies have little chance of reversing these trends in the short term. The chief improvements are expected in public programmes to consolidate community infrastructure (drinking water supply, rural electrification, roads and tracks, schools and health centres).

- The major challenge for the countries of the North is to strike a dynamic balance between two agricultures which are complementary in theory but often conflict in the use and development of rural areas. One is "competitive" agriculture, looking out to the global market. The other is "localised environmental and multifunctional", aimed at production of goods and services (including public) intended for knowledgeable and demanding consumers (Pisani, 2004). The reform of the CAP which has been in progress since the adoption of Agenda 2000, which replaces the philosophy of price support with that of direct aid and applies the principle of decoupling, blocked incentives to produce. The impact on structures and the productivity of European agriculture is real. The average size of farms has been increasing and the level of real agricultural incomes has been falling over the period 1998-2005 (as is the case in France). These agricultural incomes are partly offset at household level by the growth in incomes from other activities. It seems likely, however, that the probable rise in prices linked to demographic growth, saturation of productive areas around the world and the increasing number of climatic accidents will modify this trend to the *de facto* disqualification of agricultural activity.

At Euro-Mediterranean level, one of the most urgent challenges concerns identifying joint development paths, not only specific to the agricultural sector but for the agro-food system as a whole. Reflection and action to develop clear and transparent rules would be extended, with development of local specificities, sharing of knowledge, formation of international partnerships between agricultural and agro-food companies in the Basin, and the creation and strengthening of interregional production and marketing zones.

The inclusion, empowering and effective participation of the most vulnerable groups in the local rural development process remains a major challenge for the South and East Mediterranean countries. The adoption of local, participatory measures is at the heart of agricultural and rural development policies in the Mediterranean, but the level of learning and taking ownership of institutional mechanisms by rural communities (or the most deprived groups) is not adequate. This clearly requires action and cooperation in the field of capacity building. The importance of the role of international organisations falls into the same rationale. The latter are increasingly attached to supporting and building the

negotiating capacity of States in the international trade and policy context, and to encouraging the ability to adapt the new paradigms of agricultural and rural development to specific national and local conditions.⁴

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4 - In this regard, the “LeaderMED” initiative now in progress, with the support of the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (IAMB) in the framework of the Leader + programme, involving eight local action groups in the Puglia Region of Italy and selected rural areas in Turkey, Malta, Lebanon and Syria, could provide interesting food for thought and ideas for action. Other lessons could be drawn from the experiences of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountains (SARD-M) initiative implemented by FAO with the participation of several governments, representatives of civil society and international organizations, including Ciheam which is charged with implementing the initiative in the Mediterranean though the IAMB.

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