

Info Flash Rural Development

The Info Flash Rural Development is a periodic information service by the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development which appears approx. 4 times per year. It is distributed by e-mail, though two issues per year are additionally included in the Rural Development News (as this one). The Info Flash provides highlights of rural development resources, and informs on key activities of, and in relation to, rural development within the SDC environment.

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Your contributions to the sdc focal point for rural development

Most readers by now have heard about the SDC Focal Point for Rural Development. Those who have not will find information on what the FP is and what its purpose is, on its web platform at www.sdc-ruraldevelopment.ch.

So far, most contributions to the web platform of the Focal Point come from a few interested people from SDC's thematic divisions and from the FP management team. However, we think that contributions from users – rural development practitioners from COOFs, programmes and partners, are an important success factor for the Focal Point. Therefore, we would like once more to encourage you to contribute your experiences and ideas. For example:

- Write up your experiences in rural development practice in whatever form you like – story, case study etc. You can also send us pieces that were originally written for another purpose – a workshop, a local newsletter etc.
- Write up your ideas on how rural development practice could be improved – many rural development practitioners are dissatisfied in one way or the other with how rural development is approached. The Focal Point is a good opportunity to share your concerns and ideas – also crazy ones – as food for thought with others.
- Write about issues and challenges in rural development on which you and/or your organisation are currently reflecting and working. Share the insights gained already and ask about the opinions of other people who work on similar issues.

Highlights from the bookshop

Who reaps the fruit? Critical issues in the fresh fruit and vegetable chain. A critical analysis of key production, trade and consumption characteristics in the international fresh fruit and vegetable sector by the Netherlands-based Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations identifies key challenges and opportunities of the sector from the perspective of poverty reduction and sustainable development (http://www.somo.nl/html/paginas/pdf/Who_reaps_the_fruit_june_2006_ESP.pdf).

Managing the livestock revolution. This publication by the world bank provides guidance on policy and technology to address the negative impacts of a fast growing sector. It is key reading for anybody who has to deal with livestock issues (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTARD/Resources/Livestock_final+no+maps.pdf)

Harnessing trade for development – benefiting from market access opportunities. This short paper provides an update on the Doha development agenda, and suggests that an ‘aid for trade’ mechanism should be established within the frame of the Doha Round negotiations (<http://www.id21.org/insights/insights59/pdf.html>).

Poverty reduction strategies and the rural productive sectors: what have we learnt, what else do we need to ask? This paper by ODI states that despite the fact that more than 75 percent of the world’s poor live and work in rural areas, five years of experience with Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) show that they have generally not dealt well with rural poverty and the rural economy. There is among others a need to seek consensus over paths to pro-poor economic growth and role of the state in the rural productive sectors (http://www.odi.org.uk/nrp/nrp100_web.pdf).

Aid effectiveness in microfinance. Micro-finance is an issue that is ever high on the rural development agenda. The World Bank and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) took the courageous step of asking CGAP for an external evaluation of their micro-credit projects. The short-comings and problems uncovered in this evaluation can provide useful insights for other agencies engaging in micro-finance (http://www.ruralfinance.org/servlet/BinaryDownloaderServlet/38820_Document.pdf?filename=1151401900130_Aid_effectiveness_in_MF_FocusNote_35.pdf&refID=38820).

Walking tightropes: supporting farmer organisations for market access. Despite their mixed record in the past, Farmer Organisations (FOs) are being asked to play an increasing role in supporting commercial agricultural development among smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa. This paper by ODI suggests that external support to such FOs needs to be skilled, sensitive, consistent and patient if FOs are not to be another development disappointment (<http://www.odi.org.uk/nrp/99.pdf>).

Informal traders lock horns with the formal milk industry – the role of research in pro-poor dairy policy shift in Kenya. This paper presents a remarkable story of evidence-based policy making. The high-quality, credible and relevant research results pinpointed a basic problem in dairy development in Kenya: the need to recognise and develop the informal sector that markets the vast majority of milk in Kenya. Although the resulting changes in national policy are still in the legislative process, changes in attitude and behaviour of key actors toward the informal milk market can be observed from national level down to local level (http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/working_papers/wp266.pdf).

Food product marketing: the principal cash source of farmers in Burkina Faso – largely ignored by the policy makers. In the first Info Flash Rural Development (1/2005) we presented the report in French on a joint research project on food crop marketing in Burkina Faso. In this RDN you find now a summary article of that long report in English and a French version of it on the FPRD website.

Cash transfers – mere ‘gadaffi syndrome’ or serious potential for rural rehabilitation and development? There has been a stark dichotomy between development approaches concerned with the productive sectors, and those concerned with social protection, which have been widely regarded as a drain on public resources. This paper argues that the two are complementary and that social protection is less of a ‘drain’ than previously thought. Recent experience suggests a larger niche for cash transfers than many suppose. This paper reviews the evidence, drawing out implications for agriculture and natural resource development (<http://www.odi.org.uk/nrp/97.pdf>)

Tools, methods and learning

A Toolkit for Progressive Policymakers in Developing Countries. Evidence-based policy (EBP) as opposed to opinion-based policy, is an approach that ‘helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation. The aim of this toolkit is

to identify lessons and approaches from EBP in the UK which may be valuable for developing countries. The approaches and tools presented are intended for progressive policymaker or policy advisers in the public sector in developing countries (<http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/rapid/tools3.pdf>).

Tools for knowledge and learning: a guide for development and humanitarian organisations. This handbook contains 30 selected knowledge management and learning tools organised in five categories, namely strategy development, management approaches, collaboration mechanisms, knowledge sharing and learning, and knowledge capture and storage (http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/Documents/KM_toolkit_web.pdf).

Link tips

Organic cotton. Want to know everything (or at least a lot) about organic cotton? Visit the organic cotton sites of FiBL (Research Institute for Organic Agriculture) (<http://www.fibl.org/english/cooperation/projects/organiccotton.php>) and of Helvetas (http://www.helvetas.ch/wEnglish/organic_cotton/welcome_page.asp?navid=37).

EASYPol. This site provides an on-line, interactive multilingual repository of downloadable resource materials for capacity development in policy making for food, agriculture and rural development. EASYPol materials are developed and maintained by the Agricultural Policy Support Service of FAO and are available also in French and Spanish (http://www.fao.org/tc/EASYPol/output/index_main.asp?lang=EN).

Innovative rural development activities supported by sdc

Combating malnutrition as a business – the potential of Spirulina algae. This study (funded by SDC) states that Spirulina is not only a health food for wealthy health-conscious Westerners, but has the potential to enhance the nutritional status of poor people in the South. In addition, its production and processing can

be profitable business opportunities for small-scale women entrepreneurs in rural areas. In order to make these opportunities reality, development interventions need to apply a market creation approach, i.e. to build up supply and demand gradually in parallel (<http://www.msdcconsult.ch/SpiPubFinalCompLeastres.pdf>). Information on Spirulina in French is available at Antenna Technologies (<http://www.antenna.ch/index.php?t=main&s=0&m=100&a=1001&f=h&p=173>).

First Mile Project. The «First Mile» project (with partial funding support of SDC) supports groups of local learners in the Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme in Tanzania to share their experiences and expertise in learning how to develop marketing chains, through bridging the “First Mile”. The “First Mile” is the connectivity gap between a village with no electricity and no telephone line to the nearest computer that is online (<http://www.first-miletanzania.net>)