


Chapter 42

Agricultural Cooperatives for Sustainable Development of Rural Territories and Food Security: Morocco's Experience

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ABSTRACT

This chapter deals with the elaboration of a conceptual framework for agricultural cooperatives in Morocco: sustainable development of rural territories. The farming cooperative associations form an effective means for the advancement of the agricultural sector, being one of the elements of agricultural policy, which play an important role in the development of agricultural production, both plant and animal, as well as in the development process in Morocco, especially for rural development, and through it, rural income of the farmers and their social statuses. In this chapter, the authors have taken the Moroccan agriculture cooperatives as a case of cooperative longevity and survival in order to observe the evolution and processes of adaptation to the distinct economic, social, and environmental demands of a broad range of member-owners. The demands of the farming community, members, and society have resulted in social and environmental factors being as much a priority as economic aspects.

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INTRODUCTION

Cooperative movement dates back to the end of the XIX century – the beginning of the XX century and covers over 700 million cooperatives worldwide. The homeland of cooperation is considered to be the UK. As early as 1761, sixteen weavers from East Ayrshire, Fenwick village created the Fenwick Weavers' Society, the first cooperative organization of the industrial age. In 1795, in the English village of Hull, local residents rebelled against high prices set by local millers and also cooperated to establish a fair price for the products which resulted in forming a consumer cooperative in Ayrshire in 1796.

In the mid-1990s, almost half of the world's population was provided with products and services of cooperative enterprises. According to the International Labor Organization (2007), in 47 countries, there were 330,000 agricultural cooperatives with a total number of individual members of 180 million people. Currently, almost 800 million people are the members of cooperatives, which is four times more than fifty years ago. Cooperatives provide about 100 million jobs worldwide, as well as various services to half of the world's population. International Co-operative Alliance established in 1895 to promote the cooperative model brings together 315 organizations from 110 countries (International Co-operative Alliance [ICA], n.d.).

In the EU, over 50% of agricultural products are grown, processed, and sold through cooperative marketing systems. European Community of Consumer Cooperatives (Euro Coop) brings together 2.5 million consumer cooperatives with a membership of more than 21 million people and 359 thousand employees. In the EU, agricultural cooperatives perform a large part of farming from almost full coverage (the Netherlands, Denmark, and Ireland) to 80% of agricultural organizations (France and Germany). In other EU countries, these figures are lower. In the countries with a high level of cooperation development, the total number of members in cooperative organizations significantly exceeds the number of farms since each farmer is usually a member of several cooperative societies.

Nowadays, the turnover of cooperative enterprises is \$2.2 trillion. In Japan, over 90% of all farmers are the members of cooperatives. In Canada, 40% of the population are the members of at least one cooperative. In New Zealand, cooperatives are responsible for 95% of the dairy market. Romanian cooperatives keep the country's best resort facilities. Agricultural cooperatives in France have the second-largest system in the world of banking and credit institutions – Credit Agricole.

Based on the described background, this chapter considers conceptual framework for agricultural cooperatives in Morocco aimed at sustainable development of rural territories and gives some examples of such organizations.

BACKGROUND

Basic Definitions

Let us now consider some terms and definitions important for the sphere of agricultural cooperatives operation. According to the International Cooperative Alliance, a cooperative is an autonomous association of women and men, who unite voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise (ICA, n.d.).

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