

OECD, Development and Agriculture: the Case for Policy Coherence, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris, 2005. PP. 123.

Reviewed by: Percyslage Chigora

Agriculture is one of the major areas that are critical in development discourse. The current shortage in food globally points to key challenge in realizing development particularly in developing countries were the majority that are poor live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. The text is set forth to address pertinent policy issues that affect agricultural development, in particular the role played by OECD in shaping policies for agricultural development.

Chapter one marks as the introduction to the text and establishing the linkage between Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The major objective of the text was cited as the need to ‘discuss the extent to which agricultural trade policies in OECD countries are coherent with, and supportive of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and particularly elimination of extreme poverty and hunger’ (pg. 23).

Chapter two analysed the OECD domestic policies and questioning their coherence to a set of development objective. Three instruments that are central to supporting agricultural incomes and promotion of domestic agricultural production were analysed. The chapter also analysed the impacts of OECD country agricultural policies on development. Using four levels of analysis, i.e country, policy, commodities and household levels key issues were highlighted. To which it was noted that in terms of country specific dimension the impact is far from being uniform and is depended on a number of factors. The major strength of the chapter lies in the empirical date it provides in measuring policy coherence. In essence the author noted,

For many developing countries, and particularly the least developed countries, putting in place appropriate farm level risk management instruments, such insurance schemes or future markets will not be feasible. The choice will lie between national measures such as storage policies, border policies or compensatory finance schemes (pg. 42-43).

Chapter three dwelt on the coherence between OECD country's agricultural trade policies and the development objectives. It explained the impact of both regional and bilateral liberalism on agricultural policies. The Chapter discussed how agricultural trade preferences have contributed to development. The role played by developing countries in influencing the design of the rules of the international trade system and how they have tried to fit their policies to the international trade rules was discussed. Important factors surrounding their success were alluded to. Pertaining to the major problems of international commodity market the chapter did recommend that,

Tackling the significant market concentration in commodity chains, promoting corporate social responsibility including through the use of codes of conduct, helping to develop new opportunities, promoting diversification, helping raise the quality and encouraging increased value added processing are among the areas where OECD interventions could help to promote MDGs in these sectors (pg. 60).

Chapter four dwelt on policy coherence between country's regulatory policy and development objective as regulatory measures have a great potential in strengthening agricultural trade. The chapter analysed how non tariff measures have played a role in agricultural trade protection. Factors affecting the regulatory framework were espoused.

Chapter five analysed issues of development assistance policy and agricultural trade, trends in overall aid and agricultural aid to be specific were espoused. Dwelling on trade related assistance the chapter examined the factors that have affected agricultural trade in developing countries. Food aid was also analysed and key issues surrounding aid was highlighted. Pertaining to aid to agriculture the chapter noted,

The quality of aid is often low. It is often unpredictable; targeted at technical assistance and emergency aid rather than investments, long term capacity, and institutional support; tied to contractors from donor countries; driven by separate donor objectives rather than coordinated to support a national plan; overly directed to poorly governed countries for geo-political reasons; and not evaluated or documented systematically for results (pg. 78).

Chapter six dwelt on the domestic environment analysing policy coherence within developing countries. Specific areas that are pertinent in developing countries to bring about success in policy coherence were highlighted. Of particular importance the chapter did cite a number of critical areas that should be worked on to enable agricultural growth and rural development. At most it pertains to,

‘good governance, including the rule of law lack of corruption, conflict prevention and resolution, and sound public administration...trade reforms should be reformed to address corruption and delays that inhibit cross border trade flows. Translating improved market access for agricultural products into significant poverty reduction...rural financial markets and institutions should be supported to make it easier to gain access to credit. Recognition must be given to the role of women in food production...’ (pg. 84).

Chapter seven marks as the conclusion providing an overall assessment of what needs to be done in order to enhance agricultural development from the point of view of policies designed to achieve that goal. Most importantly it proffered new areas for further research with the aim of achieving agricultural development.

The text is of utmost importance to researchers and practitioners in agricultural development not only in the OECD countries but non members as well. For researchers it opens areas of debates and those of further research.