



Living Countrysides

Rural development processes in Europe:
The state of the art

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Foreword: Romano Prodi, President of the European Union

"This book presents a comprehensive and path-breaking overview and analysis of rural development processes throughout Europe. It profiles how new countrysides are emerging, characterized by new multi-functional enterprises, strong regional economies, new professional identities, and networks that interlink the rural and the urban. Multi-functionality, as the case studies from the different regions show, is a central feature of these changes, allowing farm enterprises to engage in new activities, such as agro-tourism, the production, transformation and commercialisation of quality products, the management of landscapes and nature, the production of energy crops, part-time farming and new co-operative arrangements. By engaging in these processes, rural enterprises are strengthened and the countryside as a whole is more able to effectively meet the new demands emerging from society at large."

Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter outlines the historical background of rural development practices, drawing attention to the impressive heterogeneity of current rural development processes in Europe.

Chapter 2: Agritourism

Through agritourism the urban population is offered accessibility to, and hospitality within the countryside. This chapter sketches the practice of agritourism in the Green Heart of Italy, Umbria. It is

followed by a brief review of agritourism in Ireland. In both cases special attention is given to exploring the socio-economic impact of these activities.

Chapter 3: The protection of nature and landscape

Tir Cymen is a Welsh expression referring to 'well-crafted land'. It is also the name of a pilot scheme, now extended across Wales, which aimed to demonstrate how, using a market-based approach, environmental management could be integrated with agricultural production on farms. Farmers' experiences of the scheme are discussed, followed by a short review of related experiences in the Netherlands.

Chapter 4: Diversification

Diversification can take many routes. This chapter discusses at length the experience of German farmers' diversification into energy crops. It is a form of diversification that might be extremely interesting for society at large and which is, simultaneously, a promising opportunity for farmers.

Chapter 5: New on farm activities

Whilst diversification implies the inclusion of more or new crops and animals on farms, new on-farm activities relate to the integration of non-agricultural activities on the farm. The example of 'care provision' on Dutch farms is discussed here as one example of an interesting new development

Chapter 6: Quality production

Increasingly society is asking for differentiated and high quality foods. In this context 'old' or traditional products are recapturing the attention of consumers, and new products are being developed. In this chapter the focus is on Parmesan cheese, an 'oldy' and 'goldy'. The main text is followed by a short discussion on newly developed quality products in the UK. 73

Chapter 7: Regional Production

European consumers are increasingly appreciating products with a specific regional background and flavour. Furthermore, many regional products are also sustainable, utilising environmentally friendly agricultural techniques and local marketing and distribution. Here, the regional products of the Dutch Wadden Isles are highlighted. The main text is supplemented by a short description of the Scalognno di Romagna, a small shallot from Italy

Chapter 8: Direct marketing

Direct marketing, and more generally the development of short chains between production and consumption, is another development changing the contours of European agriculture. This chapter discusses the Farmers' Market in Frankfurt. Additional examples are from Andalusia, Spain (consumer co-operatives) and from the English-Welsh borderland.

Chapter 9: Organic Farming

Ecological or organic farming is contributing significantly to the transition in European farming. The chapter here discusses the production, marketing and impact of an organic olive oil co-operative in Spain. This is followed by brief descriptions of organic practices in Tuscany, Germany and Wales.

Chapter 10: New Co-operative Arrangements

All kinds of new arrangements between farmers are emerging within processes of rural development. Often these involve co-operatives. This theme is illustrated through reference to a new type of cooperative that has emerged in the Netherlands. Whilst many 'traditional' co-operatives link farming in

a more balanced way with markets, this new type tries to rebalance the relations between farming and the state.

Chapter 11: Farming economically

Within the context of rural development, the trajectories and structure of farm enterprises are changing considerably. Part of this change is inspired by economic farming strategies that seek to construct systems of low external input agriculture. This strategy is illustrated through the experience of a cost reduction programme in Ireland. The case is followed by a short review of low external input agriculture in the Netherlands.

Chapter 12: Part-time farming

For many decades part-time farming (or what has been called pluriactivity) was considered a deviation from mainstream farming. Within the context of rural development, the phenomenon is here re-evaluated. The chapter offers detailed insights from Ireland where part-time farming is taking on a new importance, and from a brief review of part-time farming activities and their contribution in Germany.

Chapter 13: The socio-economic impact of rural development processes within Europe

This chapter analyses the overall impact of rural development using a matrix constructed during a research programme at EU level, in which several universities and research institutes took part. It indicates that rural development is wide spread throughout Europe and that its economic contribution to regional and national economies is considerable. Rural development is not the marginal activity of marginal people on marginal farms. It results in new, robust rural enterprises.

Chapter 14: A further note on impact

Farm based rural development is not only beneficial for farmers. On the contrary, it might revitalise the rural economy as a whole. Using the province of Zeeland in the Netherlands, this chapter demonstrates the substantial nature of the so-called 'multiplier' of rural development practices.

Chapter 15: Rural development, institutions and policy

In this chapter the newly emerging rural development policies in Tuscany, Italy, are described. Tuscany is known for its wide-spread and multi-faceted rural development practices. Special attention is given to the new relations that are established between rural actors and the regional state.

Chapter 16: The dynamics and prospects of rural development in Europe

This concluding chapter presents the results of a European wide survey of farmers. The chapter shows that the European countryside is indeed changing in impressive and stimulating ways. It also shows the considerable potential for further rural development.

Can be ordered through:

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