

Enhancing the Productive Capacity of the poor in Cameroon

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Outline of Presentation

1. Introduction/General Presentation
2. Poverty and Food Security Situation
3. Agriculture and Rural Sector
4. Some Characteristics of Poverty in Cameroon
5. Vision and Strategies
6. Actions to Improve production and Productivity and reduce Poverty
7. Challenges
8. Conclusion

General Presentation

- - Surface area: 475 440 km², 47 Million Ha
- - Situated between latitude 2 and 13 degrees and longitude 9 and 16 degrees
- - 20.1 million inhabitants
- - GDP per inhabitant is 2300 dollars (low income nation as per the world bank)
- - total arable land is 7.2 million hectares
- - following FAO classification, Cameroon is a low income and food deficit nation

- - agriculture is considered as the driving force of the economy with a contribution of 20% to the GDP
- - More than 60% of the active population is involved in Agriculture
- -After the economic crisis, the country is now experiencing positive growth rates with about 5% growth in 2012 as against 2,2% population growth rate

- - However, this growth is not yet transformed into social development as some social indicators show:
- 1. an estimated 26% of population still under feed
- 2. 26% do not have access to potable water
- 3. Infant mortality was 59.7 per thousand and for children less than five years was 136 per thousand in 2012

Poverty and Food Security Situation in the Country

- - **39.9 % of the population live below the poverty line** with average expenditures evaluated at 439 787 FCFA (\$880)
- - However, there is **spatial disparities** as far as poverty is concern and has been evolving over time
- Poverty **has reduced in the urban** centers over the recent years **but has instead increased in the rural areas especially in the three northern regions of the Country.**

- In general, **90% of the poor live in rural areas where the main activity is agriculture**
- - Despite the reduction in poverty in general in the Country, **there is instead an increase in rural areas** where most of the farmers live
- - From studies carried out by the government in 2011 with the support of WFP about **30.3% of the rural population are vulnerable to food insecurity**
- - **Serious malnutrition** continue to persist and **7 out of the 10 regions** of the Country still present **prevalence of malnutrition of above 30% and this is an alarming situation** as far as international norms are concern

- - the different productions of the Agricultural Sector contribute differently to feeding the population:
 1. For crop production, cereals form the basic human food providing 36.2% Calories and 40% proteins with 19.5% and 22% from mais alone
 2. Roots/tubers and plantains provide respectively 30.1% and 13.8% of calories and proteins with 21% and 27% for Cassava and Plantain

- - the other productions notably animal production and fisheries provide 5.3% calories and 19.3% proteins
- - the average **energy consumption** is about **2300kcal/day/person** which is less than the average of **3100kcal/day/person** in developing countries
- - the importation of food products into the Country represents 18.2% of total imports and since 2006, they have grown by 35.1%

Agriculture and Rural Sector

- The rural sector in Cameroon is defined by MINEPAT as:
 - 1. all activities leading to crop, animal, fisheries and forestry production
 - 2. environmental and social services in the rural milieu, and
 - 3. the sustainable management of rural space, natural resources and the environment

Some Characteristics of Poverty in Cameroon

- Low Human Development Index Country as per UNDP Classification
- Low life expectancy which is currently estimated at 54 years
- Low agricultural production and productivity even though 60% of active work force is in it
- Informal sector is very strong and underemployment very high
- Over emphasis on General Education and little concentration on technical and vocational training
- Poor staffing of medical and educational institutions especially in the rural areas

Vision and Different Strategies

- - Vision 2035: for Cameroon to become an emergent nation
- - Growth and Employment strategy document: which brings out all major projects of the Country for the period 2010-2020 and is focused on economic growth and employment in contrast to PRSD which was focused on the social sector
- - the rural development sector strategy which presents the different programmes and projects of the sector and this in total compliance with the Growth and Employment strategy document.

Actions to Improve Productivity and Reduce Poverty in the Country

- From the above strategies a number of actions have been put in place:
 1. Re-inforcing the agricultural extension system of the Country through the national agricultural extension and research programme
 2. the redynamisation of cooperatives to help vulnerable groups to better organise themselves and develop their abilities to manage their own structures
 3. development of professional training in the agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry sectors and vocational training in other sectors of the economy

4. the provision of support to income generating activities of the rural poor through a number of programmes and projects
5. Providing support to some microfinance institutions to improve on their services and bring them nearer to the rural poor
6. Provision of inputs to some farmers especially those organised in groups, these inputs include seeds, fertilisers, piglets, tractors etc

7. Special projects for the settlement of young farmers and provision of loans to youths of the informal sector

8. Entrepreneuriat support programme for women

9. Community Development support programmes to improve on living conditions in rural areas and even in poor settlements in urban areas

- 11. Increased investments in the health sector with the assistance of donors and partner institutions and Countries
- 12. At the level of Higher Education, there are efforts to professionalise training laying emphasis on skills development and no longer on General Education
- 13. Free primary education by the government and a new policy for vocational training

Challenges

- It is however important to note that, most of these initiatives do get to just a few of the poor
- The poor are not well organised and the management of their groups or cooperatives is poor
- More than 70% of food production is by poor rural women and hence need for clearly defining the target

- need for modernisation of rural areas to stabilise the active youths
- Modernisation of the extension services to help improve on the capacity of the small farmers
- Restructuring of professional training in the Country to facilitate capacity building and skills development no matter the sector of activity and age group
- The promotion of adult capacity building programmes in rural areas to promote self reliant Development and making the rural poor to have control over their own destiny

- Existence of a large number of small and medium size enterprises but the jobs created are very unstable
- Economic growth in the Country over the past few years but there is accentuation of poverty in some Urban areas and especially in rural areas
- The need to increase education opportunities in peri-urban and rural areas while making sure quality is preserved
- The need for a social security system which includes agricultural workers, self employed persons and workers of the informal sectors

Conclusion

- In Cameroon, improving agricultural production and productivity is very important in poverty reduction since agriculture is the driving force of the economy employing 60% of the active work force
- Improving the healthcare system: Human development and infrastructure especially in rural areas
- Emphasis on professionalisation and vocational/ skills development no matter the age
- Putting in place a social security system that covers all workers of the nation, and
- Making the poor to believe in themselves and that they can succeed to move out of poverty.