Inter-University Cooperation for Rural Development

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Hanoi, Dec 5th, 2008
Challenges of rural development in Vietnam
by J-Ph Peemans… 10 years ago

Importance of rural development for global development of the country

Rural population (≤ 70%) ↑
→ need of food self-sufficiency in rural areas

Urban population ↑ ↑
→ need of increasing food product supply and diversification

Global economy of the country
→ need to export agricultural products

Mean living standards ↑
→ need to avoid impoverishment of rural households

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Challenges of rural development

Market liberalization

→ International references

→ Loss of autonomy in farmers’ decision for crop and animal production

→ Increasing income differences among rural households according to regions, inside régions, and inside rural communities, depending on market facilities, available infrastructure and adapting capability to new context

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Challenges of rural development

How to reconcile market performance and sustainable development?

So far, no general model has proved efficient in all aspects of market economy and sustainable development throughout the world.

Major local components are included in global problematics e.g. historical context of local development

→ Challenge for interdisciplinary and interuniversity cooperation
Modernization of agriculture

↔ sustainable development

Huge modernization projects often failed to catch up « backwardness » of rural communities

→ social and environmental damages

→ emergence of few performing farmers and

→ marginalization of others (« extinction » in the North)

→ conflicts for land and water resources in the South
Rediscovery of rural community dynamics

Need for reverse approach of rural development → inherent dynamics of rural societies

Historical creativity and adaptibility

Intuitive knowledge of local ecosystems in all dimensions (physical and human constraints)

Essential approach in Vietnam with 70% rural population
Challenges of rural development

North-South university partnership for rural development

No simple transfer from North- to South-Universities and from South-Universities to rural communities

Exchange of expertise to approach common problematics

Involving qualified disciplinary specialists whose priority is to integrate their own speciality in interdisciplinary approach of rural development, first condition for sustainable development

Monodisciplinary approaches lead to non sustainable development and often serious damages to rural communities and environment

Studies should target the majority of small farm holders and related contractors in rural areas
CUD cooperation with Hanoi Agricultural University (HAU)

Inter-Institutional Cooperation
(CUI, Coopération Universitaire Institutionnelle)

Program started in 1997

Aims at general and « long term » support to ≈ 12 universities in the world

HAU selected because of impact on rural development →
  • general development of Vietnam
  • all disciplines (faculties) involved in rural development
  • lot of agricultural executives and decision-makers throughout Vietnam were trained at HAU
  • number of students ≈ Belgian « complete » universities

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First program 1997-2002

Creation of the « Interdisciplinary Study Center for Rural Development » (CEIDR)
  • Research on farming system changes in the last decades
  • Particular focus on animal production and socio-economics
  • Support to local initiatives of farmers

Training of teachers and researchers (international courses in Hanoi, short stays in Belgium)

Editing teaching material for bachelor students

Filling (part of) the gap of scientific books and journals on rural development
Second program 2003-2007

CEIDR development
→ access to national and international funds
→ extension of research to small rural enterprises for agricultural product processing (involvement of the new Faculty of post-harvest and food processing technologies)

Small research projects of bachelor students supervised by young teachers

Support to practice training of bachelor and master students
CUD cooperation with HAU

…/… Second program 2003-2007

Involvement of new Belgian colleagues (younger generation)

Post-graduate scholarships in Belgium

Support to PhD students in Vietnam and partial support to PhD students in Belgium with Vietnamese scholarships (+ 1 full CUD)

Support to central library of HAU to intra- and internet networks to foreign language learning

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Third program 2008-2012

Increasing financial support (2.000.000 euros / 5 years)

All faculties included + associated universities and research institutes (VAAS…)

CEIDR: autonomy from CUD support

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CUD cooperation with HAU

.../... Third program 2008-2012

Fund for research projects: annual application
- focused on rural development
- inter-faculty and inter-university studies
- involving PhD students

PhD scholarships
- 12 in Vietnam (need to support and upgrade local PhD schools)
- 12 in Belgium (« sandwish »)

→ Strategic point to discuss in this panel

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CUD cooperation with HAU

…/… Third program 2008-2012

Training sessions to scientific research methodologies (future master?)

Inter-faculty seminars on rural development and annual inter-university workshops

Support to the reform of master programs at HAU and to the management of studies and students

CUD-DGCD annual price for the best 3 « small research projects » involving bachelor students

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New CUD program in 2008
« Pôles de Formations Spécialisées » (PFS)

September 2009 : opening of an international Master in Rural Sociology and Economics at HAU

- Vietnam
- Laos
- Cambodia

Towards recognition in Vietnam and Belgium
CUD-PIC projects on rural development in Vietnam
« Projets Interuniversitaires Ciblés »

By starting dates (3-5 years projects):

1998 : Lutte contre la pauvreté en milieu rural grâce au développement des productions animales

2000 : Recherche-développement d’une technologie d’utilisation rationnelle et durable des eaux nécessaires à l’irrigation dans le Delta du Mékong

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CUD-PIC …/…

2004 : Amélioration de la production vivrière sur les sols pauvres de la zone côtière du Centre Vietnam par une optimisation du cycle des matières organiques au sein des exploitations familiales.


2009 : Improving management practices and food safety related to the use of chemicals for a sustainable freshwater aquaculture in the Mekong Delta.
Thanks to the CUI-UAH piloting committee

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Not to forget we are working for these people