

The Rutgers University Policy Research Consortium

From Green Revolution to Contemporary Agricultural Transformation

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The neoclassical combination of classical structural transformation with the growth of sectors other than agriculture relative to it, and agricultural transformation driven by increases in labor productivity and greater use of non-labor inputs remains the dominant paradigm for development of agricultural economies. Thus much policy effort to foster such development, notably via investment in agricultural R&D, public and private, to generate the improved technologies that power the productivity growth, as argued by the authors in IFAD (2016, chapter. 8). But, given the continuing prevalence of food insecurity in too many parts of the developing world, contemporary agricultural transformation increasingly requires development planners and policy makers to deliberately take a holistic view of transformations. And climate change is forcing an increased emphasis on resilience.

Contemporary agricultural transformation requires more emphasis on the human nutritional dimensions of development. Nutrition is a critical consideration for strategic thinking about development policy that has been insufficiently attended to in the recent decades despite its prominence in the discussions that led to the creation of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1945. Masters and colleagues (2018) elaborate on these nutritional dimensions so for brevity here it is merely noted that recent policy focus has significantly shifted concerning addressing nutrition in agricultural transformation and in food policy more generally.

Such changes have helped support evolution of fresh emphasis on government efforts to stimulate and accelerate transformation through higher levels of agricultural expenditures and improved agricultural policy, along with increasing involvement of civil society and the private sector in policy making. The processes and products of the African Union's CAADP have documented the considerable but largely still insufficient investments, and insufficiently gender inclusive, highly diverse progress in policy change, from Senegal to Ethiopia, Zambia to Uganda. African agricultural and structural transformations that may be characterized as something of a Green Revolution will surely be much different from those of Asia, and will certainly not be easy to achieve, even with greatly increased investment in agricultural R&D (including through the CGIAR) to support sustainable intensification and adaptation, as is instructively documented regularly by AGRA. The importance of political will to be able to implement wise policy successfully and sustainably is increasingly well recognized (as in chapter 2 of that Report), and the requirements for policies that lead to good and effective governance cannot be overstated.

References:

- AGRA (2018). [Africa Agriculture Status Report 2018](#): *Catalyzing Government Capacity to Drive Agricultural Transformation*. Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Nairobi.
- IFAD (2016). *Rural Development Report: Fostering Inclusive Rural Transformation* Rome.
- Masters, W.A., N.Z. Rosenblum and R.G. Alemu (2018). Agricultural transformation, nutrition transition and food policy in Africa: Preston curves reveal new stylised facts. *Journal of Development Studies*, 54(5), 788-802.