

It is necessary to rethink the process of agrarian transformation by approaching agrarian reform as a strategic vehicle for social and sustainable development. This has implications for general agricultural and economic growth, as well as for social justice and the conception of development as an expansion of freedom.

- **Asset distribution, agrarian reform and economic growth**

Various analytical studies of the economic and historical factors of agricultural development processes have highlighted a number of important linkages that should be considered in discussions of agrarian reform:

- High levels of inequality at the beginning of a development process (for example, high concentration of land and wealth) weigh negatively on long-term economic growth. Countries with a high concentration of land achieve slower economic growth than those with a more egalitarian land structure. High levels of economic and land concentration also form a barrier to the promotion of social justice, leaving millions of people in the margins of full citizenship.
- A number of factors which are neither economic nor agricultural, such as access to health and education, also play a crucial role in the expansion of productivity in agriculture, particularly for the poorest of people. However, these factors can only be transformed into economic development if productive assets, such as land, are made available to the majority of the poorest producers.
- Agrarian reform programmes should be accompanied by measures such as poverty reduction and equity promotion policies, to support the beneficiaries in order for these reforms to have significant and sustainable results.
- Land is not only a means of production; it is also a means of gaining wealth, prestige and power. Therefore, more equitable redistribution of land would lead not only to an increase in the economic assets held by the poorest people, but also an increase in their political power and social participation.

- **Critique of the economics-based model of agrarian growth, of equity and of development as seen as freedom**

Important interactions exist between political and economic processes: to be successful, economic changes require the presence of strategic actors. The political dimension of these processes and the choices of development imply that what is at issue is the predominance of the agro-exporting model and agro-business interests (principal beneficiaries of this model), in view of the fact that this model obstructs fairer and more equitable development. Agrarian modernization through integration with world trade markets, usually undertaken without changes in land structure, often has certain unwanted effects: an increase in income inequality and land concentration, a decrease in competitiveness, vulnerability of family holdings, environmental degradation...

In order to make a critical analysis of this debate and of the agro-exporter agricultural growth model based on agro-business, it is important to recognize that the theme of agrarian reform is located within the fields of economic, political and social relations. Agricultural

transformations have not been limited to modifications in the technical foundation of farm holdings, but have also included parallel effects in a range of other relatively autonomous social processes. These processes comprise self-assertion of the peasantry, modernizing interventions on the part of the State, rural migration, models of organization and representation of the interests of various social groups, etc. When these interests are in opposition with each other, conflict becomes an intrinsic factor of institutional change in the development process.

As well as forming a condition for sustainable development, agrarian reform is a major element of social justice and a process enabling expansion of the capacities of landless rural workers and the poorest rural people in general. In this sense, this reform is a major component of the conception of development (by Amartya Sen) as a process of which the primary means and principal outcome are the expansion of freedom.