

FOREWORD



The second edition of the Atlas "A New Emerging Rural World" is being published in the specific context of a general decline in commodity prices and a slowdown in growth in Africa, after our economies failed to ensure the equitable sharing of the benefits of growth registered in the years in which Africa's growth rate was one of the highest in the world.

The downward trend in commodity prices may be a constraint, but it is also an opportunity in the sense that public and private stakeholders will have to be more creative and innovative in order to unlock new sources of endogenous growth, wealth and inclusive employment with greater spillover effects for the region's economies.

Today, the challenge is to identify new tools for sustainable economic growth, this time based on principles of inclusion and equity, while maintaining a steady growth rate. Meeting these conditions will enable African economies to cope with a population that is still booming and with the ever-growing number of young people looking for education, training and jobs. These challenges are set against a backdrop of climate change and resource depletion, calling for the use of production techniques that are tailored to environmental challenges.

The principles of inclusion and equity imply adopting spatial and territorial approaches and policies that ensure rural areas benefit from the same developments and initiatives as urban areas; that responsible investments are made in rural areas; and that women and young people have access to the factors of production, especially training, land, water, finance, renewable energy, markets and income that reflects the fruits of their labour.

Renewing public policies on the basis of local development would help to tackle the root causes by providing appropriate solutions to ensure people settle and remain in their areas of origin. The development of local authorities should be based on their specific characteristics, their ecosystems, their cultural heritage and their know-how combined with technological innovation and learning, especially for young people and women.

Although a healthy dose of social measures for the rural sector is a precondition for its development – as was and is still the case in the developed countries –, the fact remains that far-reaching market-based solutions need to be implemented simultaneously. The progressive transition from solidarity systems to mixed market systems will help to stimulate investment and the development of structural activities capable of laying the foundations for this much-needed change.

The governance of our natural resources and the financial resources they generate are the cornerstone of our structural change; they require appropriate solutions at the global, regional, national and local levels.

Over the years, this Atlas, which will gradually evolve into a collaborative project, will serve as a reference tool enabling us to monitor progress towards these goals and to take control of our path to achieving Agenda 2063. It is therefore a perfect addition to the toolkit the NEPAD Agency will use in its role as a think tank and an evaluator of the implementation of the African Union's rural transformation policies.

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