

Agricultural Development and Economic Growth edited by Herman M. Southworth and Bruce F. Johnston. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967.

The literature on agricultural development and economic growth is vast and varied; it ranges from theoretical discussion of the role of agriculture in economic development to empirical studies of economic behaviour of the farmers. There is, however, no agreed theory of agricultural development. Different economists hold different view-points, advance different hypotheses and provide different empirical evidence on the questions involving agricultural development and economic growth. The book under review gives a wide coverage of the issues, problems and complexities of agricultural development and economic growth. It is a collection of fourteen papers written by eighteen scholars who have distinguished themselves in their respective fields. Each paper has been commented upon by one or two equally reputed scholars. The author of each paper gives a critical survey of the literature on the subject and provides an extensive bibliography at the end of the paper. The topics surveyed are: agricultural development, barriers to change, infrastructure, education and training for agricultural growth, farm size and agricultural productivity, land reform, food and nutrition, marketing institutions, export of agricultural products, agricultural taxation, agricultural price policy, and programming of agricultural development.

The book starts with the premise that the development of linkages between the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors that will give effect to the interdependence required between them is as essential as raising agricultural productivity and inducing a marketed surplus of farm products. But, with few exceptions, there is nothing to suggest the interrelationships between agricultural development and economic growth.

From the survey of the current theories of economic development, Professor J. W. Mellor finds a restricted role of agriculture in economic development. He himself tries to formulate a general theory of agricultural development, which is based on the recognition of the initial level of income in agriculture and its implication to the capital as well as the labour which agriculture can contribute to other sectors of the economy. But he assumes away the debate on the prevalence of disguised unemployment in less developed countries and, therefore, his otherwise interesting paper becomes less appealing.

Agricultural taxation, technological and institutional changes, and

economic behaviour of the farmers have been touched by several authors. There are conflicts and clashes of view-points. But there is a consensus of opinion regarding crucial issues. The authors generally agree on the need for emphasising technical change, land reforms, rural infrastructure, and marketing and storage facilities. They also find the farmer in underdeveloped countries to be acting rationally. Hence there is a general agreement on the need for incentives to the farmers in the form of rising prices for farm products. They clash on the issue of the use of the rising farm income which is brought by rising farm prices. Mellor advocates agricultural taxation to siphon off the entire income accruing to the farmer from rising farm prices. J.S. Tolley and G.D. Gwyer, in their discussion of the international trade in agricultural products in relation to economic development, argue that taxation will induce substitution in production and thus destroy the incentives for exports of agricultural crops. Raj Krishna advocates taxation to the minimum level because of the need of maintaining prices at incentive levels. S.R. Lewis is worried about the burden of foreign aid and, therefore, argues for income-elastic taxes so that the economy is able to get rid of foreign aid as soon as possible.

The editors have done a very good job in selecting the topics and inviting the attention of able scholars to write on them. The contents of the book and the treatment of the topics are such that the book cannot fail to appeal students, teachers, research workers and even policy-makers concerned with problems of agricultural development. Because of the exhaustive bibliography at the end of each chapter, the book has special advantage for research workers.

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