

Local Governance Systems for Value Chains' Promotion: A Chance for Rural Development in Tunisia

Authors : Neil Fourati

Abstract : Collaboration between public and private stakeholders for agricultural development are today lacking in Tunisia. The last dictatorship witnessed by the country has deteriorated the necessary trust between the state and small farmers for the realization of development projects, in particular in the interior, disadvantaged regions of the country. These regions, where the youth unemployment rate is above 30%, have been the heart of the uprising that preceded the revolution. The transitional period that the country is going through since 2011 is an opportunity for the emergence of new governance systems in the context of the decentralization. The latter is recognized in the 2nd Tunisian Republic constitution as the basis of regional management. Civil society participation to the decision-making process is considered as a mean to identify measures that are more coherent with local populations' needs. The development of agriculture and food value chains in rural areas is relevant within the framework of the implementation of new decisions systems that require public-private collaborations. These new systems can lead to actions in favor of improving living conditions of rural populations. The diversification of activities around agriculture can be a solution for job creation and local value creation. The project for the promotion of sustainable agriculture and rural development in Tunisia has designed and implemented a multi-stakeholder dialogue process for the development of local value chains platforms in disadvantaged areas of the country. The platforms gather public and private organizations ; as well civil society organizations ; that intervene in a locality in relation to the production transformation or product's commercialization. The role of these platforms is to formulate realize and evaluate collaborative actions or projects for the promotion of the concerned product and territory. The dialogue process steps allow to create the necessary collaboration conditions in order to promote viable collectivities, dynamic economies and healthy environments. Effectively, the dialogue process steps allow to identify the local leaders. These leaders recognize the development constraints and opportunities. They deal with key and gathering subjects around the collaborative projects or actions. They take common decisions in order to create effective coalitions for the implementation of common actions. The plateforms realize quick success so as to build trust. The project has supported the formulation of 22 collaborative projects. Seven priority collaborative projects have been realized. Each collaborative project includes 3 parts : the signature of the collaboration conventions between public and private organizations, investment in the relevant material in order to increase productivity and the quality of local and products and finally management and technical training in favour of producers' organizations for the promotion of local products. The implementation of this process has enabled to enhance the capacities of collaboration between local actors : producers, traders, processors and support structures from public sector and civil society. It also allowed to improve the efficiency and relevance of actions and measures for agriculture and rural development programs. Thus, the process for the development of local value chain platform is a basis for sustainable development of agriculture.

Keywords : governance, public private collaboration, rural development, value chains

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