
Kenya's most pressing development problem is how to provide productive employment to a very rapidly growing number of people. According to demographic estimates, there will be a doubling of the population in the 1980-2000 period, reaching a total of 35 million, and the number of new labour force entrants in that period is estimated to be many millions more than in the twenty years prior to 1980. This disturbing problem of how to absorb a fast-growing labour force into an economy with a substantial proportion of people already living in poverty constitutes a great challenge to policy makers.

Evidently, the agricultural sector is to play a crucial role in accommodating future labour supplies, despite the fact that the total area of potential good agricultural land is small and land-man ratios are already decreasing rapidly. In several studies carried out in recent years, this problem has been analysed extensively and some far-reaching policy changes were suggested (ILO, 1972; Tidrick [World Bank] 1979; Livingstone [ILO, 1981] 1981).

Hunt's study is also concerned with Kenya's labour absorption problem and, in correspondence with the title of the book, *The Impending Crisis* - arrives at a pessimistic conclusion. As to the methods applied and the data used, the author draws heavily on Livingstone's (1981) ILO report but questions some of its assumptions and policy recommendations.

After examining the potentials of employment (and income) growth in different branches of the economy, a generally known conclusion is reached. The non-agricultural sectors (e.g. modern urban industry, rural and urban 'informal' activities, public works programmes and rural small-scale industry) all taken together are likely to offer jobs to only a minority of the future labour force entrants. Therefore agriculture is to provide the lion's share of employment needs.

The book proceeds to analyse the scope for employment creation and poverty reduction within the agricultural sector given two different options: (a) the existing patterns of, and trends in, land distribution (no land reform) and (b) a policy of substantial land redistribution (the case for land reform).

Ways to increase agricultural production and employment without land reform include enlarging the area under irrigation, drainage of valley bottoms and conversion of forests and pastures into agricultural uses. Furthermore, cropping patterns can be shifted towards crops having a higher value and using more labour per hectare. Land use may also be intensified through adoption of innovations by farmers and the resulting yield increases may induce an additional demand for labour. Many of these possibilities are incorporated in Kenya's past and current 'smallholder farm development programmes'. In particular, the Fourth Five Year Plan (1979-83) puts increased emphasis on alleviating rural poverty through these programmes.

Hunt provides a critical and detailed examination of 'the capacity of these programmes' to raise farm incomes (in particular of the poor) and/or increase wage employment. In addition, much attention is paid to possible farm innovation 'suited to the resource constraints of poor households'.

It is this part of the book which is highly recommendable. The author's knowledge of the determinants of resource allocation in peasants' households, and of poor households' responses to recommended agricultural innovations, is impressive. Most of this information was obtained during a case-study of the economic behaviour of
Kenya’s (near) future. In particular for the political establishment (with vested interests in land properties), the price of ‘inaction’ might be very high.

REFERENCES


Martin Godfrey’s objectives in this stimulating and (no doubt to some) provocative book are two-fold. Firstly, he reviews a variety of theories of the nature, causes and consequences of unemployment and the limits of neoclassical theory as an explanation of the unemployment problem in both developed and less developed capitalist economies. He identifies a number of different schools of thought — classical, neoclassical and Keynesian, ‘pioneering’ and later development economics, and Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives — and presents the reader with a concise survey of often inaccessible literature. His second objective is to relate these theories to and evaluate them in the context of recent changes in the global economy. Such convergence in theorizing as there has been has largely taken the form of the export of static neoclassical theory from North to South’ (p. 208).

He focuses attention in particular on the increasing location of industrial production in the global market in LDCs, the use of LDC migrant labour in developed capitalist economies, the consequences of land reform for the global market (for providing a living) for a large number of agricultural households. This leads the author to the main argument of the book: in order to create sufficient employment and income opportunities in the near future, a change in the pattern of land distribution is a necessary condition. Again, in this last chapter (the case for land reform) the reader is offered a painstaking and lucid discussion of the relevant issues (e.g. the arguments against subdivision of land) and the labour use effects of redistribution. Not surprisingly, the conclusion is in favour of land reform. It is convincingly argued that land redistribution results in higher output per hectare and more intensive use of labour in combination with decreased use of costly modern inputs per hectare and is therefore an attractive policy option.

However, these conclusions do not differ from those drawn by Livingstone (1981) and Tidrick (1979). These writers have also shown the positive impact on land redistribution resulting from a policy of land reform. The difference is that Hunt advocates a much more radical policy of land redistribution because, in her opinion, a moderate land reform (as proposed by Livingstone) would fail to make a significant contribution to absorbing the new labour entrants.

As to the possibility of subdividing Kenya’s land, there is also no disagreement. Large mixed farms (not yet de facto subdivided), the so-called gap-farms (twenty to fifty hectares) and settlement scheme farms are all categories of farms offering these possibilities. Even within the smallholder sector, there is room for further subdivision.

The central question is whether or not a radical land reform is a sine qua non for sufficient labour supply absorption. The answer depends, to a large extent, on the numerical value of the assumptions made within the model. The results of the quantitative impact of land redistribution in terms of employment and output increases. These assumptions concern, among others, the possible ceiling of subdivision, the average labour input per hectare, land fertility, cropping patterns, output value and the speed of adoption of new technologies. Clearly, Livingstone and also Tidrick are more optimistic in estimating agriculture’s absorption capacity in the case of a moderate land reform than Hunt is. But it is beyond doubt that Hunt’s book convincingly demonstrates that Kenya’s policy makers and politicians have every reason to be very worried about...