
Editorial: African economic development

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Inquires into the notion of the development in Africa typically focuses on the agricultural economy, trade, industry and population. These different elements can be explained in terms of economic factors and extra-economic factors of development. The economic factors of development are labour, capital and technology, whereas the extra-economic factors are institutions, culture, mentalities, and religion.

In 2006, the African population was 922 millions; in 2009, it reached 1 billion. There are 54 countries in Africa with exceptional diversity in climate, geography, flore, and faune.

The agriculture sector reminds the most important sector. More than 60% of the population are employed in agriculture, of which more than half are subsistence farmers.

The agriculture of subsistence uses female and child labour, providing food and a family income. There are no big investments in this sub-sector, however, many African Governments (Senegal, Ghana, Ivory Coast, etc.) understand the importance of development and provide various forms of support such as purchasing their products, supplying them with necessary agricultural tools, organising credits and financial aids, etc.

Larger farms tend to grow cash crops such as coffee, cotton, cocoa, and rubber. These farms, normally operated by large corporations, cover tens of square kilometres and employ large numbers of labourers.

It has been observed that in the last decade, (2001 to 2011), the African continent has been strongly working, exchanging and collaborating with other developed and emerging nations such China, Brazil, India, etc. According to the African Economic Outlook, Africa's trade with China has multiplied by 10 since 2001, reaching over USD 100 billion in 2008. Many Africans leaders and decision-makers express their concern and disappointment regarding the way in which the West still looks down on Africa whereas, China, India and Brazil exhibit exactly the opposite behaviour.

Brazil, for example, has experienced great progress in agricultural production and has shared its technology with Africa in order to increase its agricultural production to create a more dynamic partner. Researchers have shown that increased investment in African agricultural technology, in general, has the potential to greatly decrease poverty in Africa. Data shows that there is an increase in the demand of cocoa and the price of this product has boomed. Hence, South Africa and Uganda have targeted their policies to take advantage of the increased demand for certain agricultural products and plan to stimulate agricultural sectors.

According to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the positive change in the African economy begun in 2001/2002 although higher GDP was evident since 2005. This trend has been sustained until the present. Even, the current worldwide financial crisis did not interrupt this progress. There was a slight stagnation for the year 2009. The continent is now experiencing faster growth. In the Sub-Saharan nations, the growth is even faster than in many developing and emerging nations in other parts of the Globe.

The World Bank reports that the economy of Sub-Saharan African countries grew at rates that match global rates. The economies of the fastest growing African nations experienced growth significantly above the global average rates.

The top nations in 2006 to 2007 include Angola, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Mauritania (see below).

Table 1 GDP growth (annual %)

<i>Country name</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Angola	18.6	22.7	13.8	2.4	2.3
Botswana	5.1	4.8	2.9	-4.9	7.2
Burkina Faso	5.5	3.6	5	3.5	9.2
Congo, Rep.	6.1	-1.6	5.6	7.5	8.8
Ethiopia	10.8	11.5	10.8	8.8	10.1
Ghana	6.4	6.5	8.4	4.7	6.6
Liberia	7.8	9.4	7.1	4.6	5.5
Malawi	7.7	5.8	8.6	7.6	7.1
Mauritania	19.4	-5.7	3.5	-1.2	5
Mozambique	8.7	7.3	6.8	6.4	7.2
Niger	5.8	3.4	8.7	-1.2	8.8
Nigeria	6.2	6.4	6	7	7.9
Rwanda	9.2	5.5	11.2	4.1	7.5
Sierra Leone	7.3	6.4	5.5	3.2	4.9
South Africa	5.6	5.6	3.6	-1.7	2.8
Sudan	11.3	10.2	6.8	4	4.5
Tanzania	6.7	7.1	7.4	6	7
Tunisia	5.7	6.3	4.5	3.1	3.7
Zambia	6.2	6.2	5.7	6.4	7.6
Zimbabwe	-3.3	0.2	-17.7	6	9

Source: World Bank
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>

African is undergoing fast and exiting new changes; recovering from a very difficult past and is now joining the World Economy as a serious player. There are many facets to these changes; this editorial deals with one, albeit important aspect. The editorial is also an invitation to other authors, to submit papers reporting on various dimensions of the changing African landscape.