

LCG Agriculture Sub-Group Assessment of the Bangladesh iPRSP

Summary

The iPRSP has been assessed from the perspective of the Agricultural sub-group. The group's overall assessment can be summarised as follows:

- Strong recognition of the need for a more holistic approach to Agriculture and of the increasing role of private sector.
- However, limited attention given to how issues of inequalities associated with agriculture and rural growth will be addressed.
- Insufficient attention given to the institutional framework required for supporting a more holistic approach and clarifying the public-private roles.
- Strong need for convergence with existing or emerging (sub) sectoral policies and strategies. For example, the need have stronger links to The National Agricultural Policy/Plan of Action

Sector Strategy

The IPRSP has defined “agriculture” in the broadest sense to cover crops, fisheries, livestock, forestry and the Rural Non Farm Economy (RNFE). This definition places agriculture within the wider rural development framework.

The early analysis within iPRSP of the agricultural sector has an underlying theme of rights based and sustainable livelihood approaches. Unfortunately, the document appears to suffer from conflicting signals on how these integrated approaches will be linked to targets for agricultural growth.

The dominant issue within IRSP is how will the benefits from agricultural growth be distributed equally. However, the strategy proposed does not address the difficult choices to be made by the government (e.g. a re-examination of whether free and subsidised public goods and services in agriculture should be enjoyed by the non-poor). Therefore the implications for the setting of sectoral priorities, targeting and the institutional framework including the roles of the public and private sector are left unresolved.

The rural growth strategy in the latter part of the iPRSP, in relation to agriculture, would be driven by policies to (a) Intensify rice production and (b) Promote crop diversification and non-farm production. Given the importance of agriculture in the rural development context, there is too little emphasis on implementation priorities for facing future challenges, and further elaboration is lacking compared to the social sectors (e.g. health and education)

The iPRSP does not address the link between farm size, poverty, access to markets (including improved inputs) and capacity to overcome market imperfections (e.g. benefit from further rice intensification). Furthermore, the strategy does not recognise the linkages to wider environmental trends such as climate change, loss of soil fertility, nutrient imbalances, lowering of water table, etc.

The iPRSP states that the private sector will be the main driver of growth but is not specific on the precise role of government on liberalisation, pricing policy and market intervention. There is insufficient focus given to what incentives will support pro poor growth (ie SME and ME) in the agribusiness sector. Furthermore the strategy does not clarify the potential linkages with private sector and public sector research centres and extension services.