

# Multifunctionality of agriculture goes beyond economics

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This market-based approach differs significantly from the often failing national and international regimes of price controls.

Unfortunately, they have been less embraced in developing countries where institutional strength and lack of awareness of the use of the instruments have deprived these countries of their benefits.

**SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION** — The estimated post-harvest losses of horticultural crops in the Association of Southeast Asian coun-

tries are approximately 30-40 per cent, about two to three times more than losses faced by the developed countries. In Malaysia, the post-harvest losses of paddy were as estimated at 18 per cent. If the losses can be reduced by 5.0-10 per cent, it will make a substantial difference in terms of self-sufficiency and the reduction in import bill. Thus reducing the post-harvest losses will definitely add a sizeable quantity to the food supply, and will facilitate the efforts to mitigate the issues of food security, making food more available

and affordable in the country.

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SAFETY NET** — This provides opportunities for producers to take advantage of non-agricultural jobs in rural areas and job opportunities in urban areas as means to improve their wellbeing. In developed economies such as in Taiwan, Korea and Japan, the share of off-farm incomes are high (more than 70 per cent of their total income). Policy options to enhance access to non-agricultural earnings for rural households are likely to include expanding ac-

cess to secondary education and improving infrastructure.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES** — It used to be that agriculture is the provider of food, job and income to mankind. However, that paradigm no longer holds under the current context of climate change, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and the concern for food security worldwide. The new theme for agriculture goes beyond its basic functions, but to enhance resource conservation, environment, preserve farm community and to al-

leviate poverty. The multifunctionality of agriculture raises its worth more than just economics.

To move forward, the new government should focus on bigger investment in sustainable production and consumption, agro-entrepreneurship development, effective risk management system, social safety nets, and environmental service concern.

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