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IN THE CONTEXT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
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## **1 Introduction and background**

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### **1.1 An introduction to rural employment**

Almost all the people who live in rural areas work in farms. For that reason, even state statistics on census have taken village and town populations as agricultural population instead of rural population. This makes this study harder for researchers who aim to write about rural employment in Turkey.

As of year 2000 census, Turkey's total population was 67.8 million, and 35.5% of that lives in villages and subdistricts. However, there is a substantial migration from rural to urban. During 1990-2000, annual population growth rate was 2.68 in urban and 0.42 in villages (Türkkan, 2006).

Due to limited job creation capacity of the economy and increasing rate of labour force lead to higher unemployment rates. Despite positive signs in the economy, the unemployment rate<sup>1</sup> could not be reduced under 10%. One of the main reasons is that other sectors could not create enough jobs to absorb the people who quit farming.

Unemployment rates seem to be lower in rural regions. That is because the rates of unpaid household workers and self employed farmers are very high. Although they are considered to be employed, many of them are just hidden unemployed.

When we look at the sectoral distribution of working population in Turkey, agriculture is still the main sector for employment. According to 2003 Household Work Force survey results, the ratios of working population in agriculture, industry and services are 33.9%, 18.1% and 48%, respectively. As can be seen in Table 4, nation-wide rate of contribution to work force is 48.3%, while it is 70.4% for men and 26.6% for women. On the other hand, the rate of contribution to work force in rural areas is 55.5%, while it is 72.9% for men and 39% for women. Moreover, 69.4% of people employed in rural regions are employed in agriculture, and this rate is 55.5% for men and 89.1% for women. In other words, almost all of the women employed in rural regions are employed in agriculture (Gülçubuk, 2005).

### **1.2 Agricultural employment**

Agriculture is a critical sector for Turkey. As of 2004, the share of agriculture in GNP is 11.6%, while that is 2.1% in EU-25 and 3.6% in new 10 members of EU. On the other hand, in 2004 the employment rate in Turkey is 34%, while it is 5.4% in EU-25 and 13.4% in new 10 members of EU (Türkkan, 2006).

In terms of employment capacity, agriculture is the main sector. According to 2003 Household Work Force survey results, 33.9% of economically active population work in agriculture. Knowing that children under 15 years old work in agriculture, we can say that about 10-12 million people work in agriculture (Gülçubuk, 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> Unemployment rate is obtained from Turkish Statistical Institute, and calculated by dividing unemployed population to total labour force.

The rate of agricultural population in total population is getting less as a result of economic development and urbanization. The ratio of agricultural population (villages and towns) was 56,1% in 1980, 41% in 1990, 35.1% in 2000, and 33.9% in 2003. (Table 1 and 2).

As can be seen in Table 2, while the rate of agricultural population in total population decreases rapidly, the rate of employment in agriculture decreases less rapidly.

Turkish agriculture has gone through substantial structural change since 1950s. Mechanization in agriculture has enabled farmers to cultivate more land, while population growth and inheritance have led to smaller farm sizes. While average farm size was 77 decares in 1952, it was 62 decares in 1980 and 57.7 decares in 1991 and 61 decares in 2001. Due to small and inefficient farms, farmers cannot get enough farm incomes. Therefore, some of the small farm land owners and farmers with no land move to other more intensive agricultural regions to work seasonally. (Gülçubuk, 2005; Karacan, 1991).

Of the total employment in agricultural sector, 50.9% come from unpaid household work force, and 43.7% come from self employed and employers. However, in other sectors, 73.8% of employment come from paid and daily waged work force, and 22.7% comes from self-employed workers (Table 3).

Most of the women in agriculture/rural regions perform their production activities in small family farms as unpaid household workers. When we look at the salary distribution of women (Table 5), the percentages of unpaid household workers, self employed or employer and paid or daily waged workers are 81.4%, 15.9% and 2.4%, respectively.

Agricultural employment rate in rural regions is especially high for women. The sector employs 50.1% of men as opposed to 83.9% of women (Türkkan, 2006).

International agricultural policies have significant impacts on rural employment in Turkey. Especially the production quotas in sugar beet, tobacco and hazel nut affect millions of farmers and agricultural workers (Özkaya, 2004).

### **1.3 Non-agricultural employment**

Besides farming, people in rural regions also work in agri-industry, handicrafts, weaving, the carpet industry, trade and so on.

Turkey has significant variations amongst regions. Considering the First Level Regional Classification, except for West Marmara and Aegean, the employment rate of agriculture in whole West Regions and Mediterranean Region is below Turkey's average of 29.5%. On the other hand, dependency on agriculture increases in other regions from 33% to 65%. The regions which have the highest agricultural employment rates are Northeast Anatolia (62%), East Blacksea (58%) and West Blacksea (51). When we just look at the rural employment, the share of agriculture in these regions changes between 72% and 84%. These data clearly show how few are the non-agricultural employment opportunities in these least developed rural regions (Türkkan, 2006).

To create non-agricultural employment opportunities for women in rural regions, Employment Education Projects have been carried out by some state organizations and skill developing courses have been organized.

## **2 The context of rural employment**

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### **2.1 New employment opportunities**

Turkey and especially rural Turkey has significant untouched resources and potential. The first thing could be “tourism” (both summer and winter). Winter tourism can create enormous employment opportunities in the eastern part of Turkey. The second potential is to utilize the hand-made materials (handicrafts, weaving and carpet) more efficiently. There are two main issues in this respect. The first one is the lack of capital in rural people, and the second one is the lack of market to sell their products.

To solve these problems, to alleviate poverty and to create new job opportunities, micro-credit has been introduced to the rural people. So far it is only used in Diyarbakir province successfully but expected to be applied in other provinces as well.

Finally, agri-industry needs to be developed, improved and wide-spread throughout the rural region for both creating new employment opportunities and creating competitive market for farmers’ products. In this way both agricultural population will decrease and farmers’ income will increase.

### **2.2 Education and skills – levels, access and provision**

Even though the Ministry of Education has tried many policies and regulations to create fair education opportunities for all, the education facilities and opportunities are so poor in rural regions. Most of the village schools do not have enough physical superstructure and infrastructure, equipment and teachers. Therefore, literacy rate among those in agricultural/rural employment is lower than in other sectors. The rate of illiteracy in agriculture is 18% while it is 3% in the construction sector. 33% of women, who have 60% share in agricultural employment, in rural regions have never attended any school. Of course, this is a very big obstacle for people who plan to migrate to urban areas to find non-agricultural jobs. Increasing education level will increase the agricultural labour quality and hence increase the productivity in agriculture. In addition, this will increase non-agricultural employment opportunities both in rural regions and urban. As of 1999, the literacy rate of women was 77.4%. This rate was 82.2% for women in urban, and 67.8% for women in rural areas (Türkkan, 2006).

Changing mandatory education time from 5 years to 8 years is a positive policy. This way the education level of the country (especially for rural people) can increase.

### **2.3 Other key factors in employment (if any)**

Social security in rural regions is very poor. Only 11.8% of farmers have social security while it is 5.8% in non-agricultural sectors. From the gender point of view, while 16.3% of men has

social security in rural, only 0.8% of women in rural has social security. In other words, 99% of women have no social security at all (Türkkan, 2006).

Poverty is more common in rural regions of Turkey because there are many small farms and farmers with no land. Since off-farm income is limited or none, their incomes are very low. Moreover, they do not have enough social security or support from the government. Therefore, they tend to migrate to urban areas, to work without insurance, or to stay unemployed and to be poorer (Sindir, 2005).

To show how poor were the agricultural policies so far, we can just look at the R&D funds spent for agriculture. The rate of R&D funds in total transfers to agriculture changed between 0.2% and 0.4% in Turkey, while it is 2% in OECD. To increase efficiency and productivity, Turkey must allocate more funds for agricultural R&D (Türkkan, 2006).

Table 6 shows the poverty levels in rural and urban. As clearly seen, absolute poverty is 3.5 times higher in rural than in urban, while relative poverty is 1.5 times higher in rural. When we look at the regions, Blacksea, East Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia regions have higher rates of absolute and relative poverty (Erdogan, 1997 and Gülçubuk, 2005).

### **3 Specific rural employment issues**

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#### **3.1 The nature of under-employment**

The information in this part is mainly based on expert views and the data indications. In Turkey, the percentage of rural population compared to EU countries is very high as indicated earlier, although the percentage of rural population decreased a lot in recent years. Recent data indicate that from the end of 2004 to the end of 2005, the employment level in the sectors other than agriculture has increased from 14.67 million to 16 million (by 9.9 percent); this is about 1.3 million increase in other sectors. Since the total employment does not increase, the increase of employment in other sectors is because of decrease of employment in agriculture. That is there is a decrease of employment by 1.3 million in agriculture because of employment decreased from 7.2 million at the end of 2004 to 5.9 million at the end of 2005. While this decrease has occurred in 2005, agricultural production value did not decrease in this year in absolute values. These figures indicate that there is very severe evidence of 'disguised unemployment', where the work available is insufficient to fully occupy a person working normally.

Turkey's agriculture sector cannot bear this severe disguised unemployment for decades, therefore this process should continue even faster and Turkish society should be prepared to accept this change. What the data indicate is an inevitable process, but at the same time, other sectors must be ready to absorb this employment movement coming from agriculture. Those who are employed in other sectors mainly is not coming from directly agriculture but coming from previous unemployed people already live in the urban areas. Therefore new comers from agriculture become unemployed who are needed to be educated in order to have them to be employed. This process could continue if Turkey continues to the process of negotiation with EU as well as economic stability is provided.

Therefore, poverty in rural areas of Turkey exists mainly because of the evidence of disguised unemployment as described by the International Labour Organization. The migration from rural

to urban is the indication of this fact. This change needs to be well understood and necessary precautions should be implemented by the executive authorities.

### **3.2 The scale of semi-subsistence farming**

In the process of restructuring agriculture in Turkey, subsistence and semi- subsistence farming will be negatively affected. This is the conclusion of the experts who work in this field. It is also indicated by official sources that Turkey's agriculture has disadvantages in the process of accordance to EU such as high populated rural areas, small scale farms, insufficient expertise in agricultural production, insufficient technology use as well as having majority of farms in the character of subsistence and semi-subsistence enterprises.

In the report prepared by European commission in 2003, some analyses were made on developments in Agricultural sector. The scale of the farms in Turkey is a lot smaller than those in European countries; the farms smaller than 5 hectares occupies 65 percent of total number of farms and the number of farms smaller than 20 hectares occupies 94 percent of all farms. Low production, high disguised unemployment and low competitiveness are the major characters of these subsistence and semi- subsistence farms which exist in Turkey as well as some EU countries such as Bulgaria and Romania. However, these subsistence and semi-subsistence farms are the main income sources of the most of rural population. On the other hand, there are commercial large farms in certain production areas. In this aspect, it is very important to direct agricultural support policies properly.

Because of the fact that subsistence and semi-subsistence farms are the major part of agriculture, entering EU would cause a lot of social problems. These possible problems could be prevented if other sectors increase their capacity especially in rural areas to absorb the unemployed man power released from subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture.

### **3.3 The implications of the 'Lisbon Strategy'**

Turkey should develop a National Lisbon Reform Programme, says an expert report. Other reforms should tackle the issues of employment of women and trade union rights. The recent meeting of the EU-Turkey joint consultative committee (JCC) presented three preliminary reports on women and employment, Turkish economic developments in the context of the Lisbon Strategy and the situation of trade union rights in Turkey. The EU-Turkey JCC is an official body that assembles representatives of organised civil society in the EU and Turkey.

The main findings of the report on economic developments in the context of the Lisbon Strategy are that Turkey has promising growth prospects, largely due to a growing young population. Nevertheless, further structural reforms are necessary. The main problems, the report finds, lie with the labour market. Unemployment rates have reached 10% in 2005. The JCC therefore recommended applying the Lisbon Strategy to Turkey in a National Reform Programme, but with different priorities. The JCC further made recommendations to improve the situation of women working in Turkey. Gender equality is far from being a reality in Turkey. The expert group also found shortcomings in the area of trade union rights.

Turkey needs to develop and implement an active labour market policy, improving quality and productivity at work. The integration of released labour forces from rural areas following agricultural reform and the creation of new jobs through rural diversification is also essential.

## 4 Overview and prospects

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One of the biggest issues Turkey will face in the future is the employment problem in rural areas, especially in agriculture. 11% of GNP is produced by 34% of agricultural employment. Agricultural population has to be reduced but it has to be planned wisely. Otherwise, it may cause bigger economic and social problems.

International policies affect Turkish agricultural policies and these policies especially affect the small farms and farmers with no land<sup>2</sup>. Lack of alternative job opportunities and low level of education force them to poverty, unemployment, migration to urban areas and working without any insurance.

Although we know that agriculture is the main employment sector, we do not have accurate and official data on especially unregistered and mobile workers in agriculture (Yildirak, 2003).

New value added projects have to be developed for unpaid household workers and youth in agriculture. Micro-credit is a good example for it. Non-agricultural sectors have to be supported and rural industry has to be developed. New employment opportunities have to be created for the excess population in agriculture<sup>3</sup>. To this end, regional-local level employment mapping can be done and in national level, comparative advantage-based job and investment opportunities can be created.

Education, health and social services need to be accessible and usable for low income and poor population. Agricultural and rural tourism have to be developed to create new income generating job opportunities. The conditions of seasonal women and children workers have to be improved and regulated. Social security rights of agricultural workers have to be given. To do that, a new, cheaper social insurance premium with once a year payment system can be developed for agriculture.

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<sup>2</sup> Around 30% of rural population has no land at all.

<sup>3</sup> To some extent, government supports agribusiness industry, non-agricultural businesses, and micro-credit projects, but these are very limited and not enough. To attract the investments in rural regions, more government supports and incentives are needed.

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**Annex**

Table1. Agricultural Population Trend in Turkey

| <b>Census Years</b> | <b>Total Agricultural Population (Villages and Towns)</b> | <b>The Ratio of Agricultural Population (%)</b> | <b>Urban Population</b> | <b>The Ratio of Urban Population (%)</b> | <b>Total Population</b> | <b>Population Growth Rate (%)</b> |
|---------------------|---|---|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1980                | 25.091.950  | 56,1  | 19.645.007              | 43,9                                     | 44.736.957              | 2,07                              |
| 1985                | 23.798.701  | 47,0  | 26.865.757              | 53,0                                     | 50.664.458              | 2,49                              |
| 1990                | 23.146.684  | 41,0  | 33.326.351              | 59,0                                     | 56.473.035              | 2,17                              |
| 2000                | 23.797.653  | 35,1  | 44.006.274              | 64,9                                     | 67.803.927              | 1,83                              |

Source: DIE, National Censuses.

Table 2. Sectoral Distribution of Employment in Turkey (thousand and 12years old and above)

| <b>Years</b> | <b>Sectors</b>     |          |                 |          |                 |          | <b>Total</b>  |          |
|--------------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|---------------|----------|
|              | <b>Agriculture</b> |          | <b>Industry</b> |          | <b>Services</b> |          | <b>Number</b> | <b>%</b> |
|              | <b>Number</b>      | <b>%</b> | <b>Number</b>   | <b>%</b> | <b>Number</b>   | <b>%</b> |               |          |
| 1990         | 9.355              | 46,9     | 4.274           | 21,4     | 6.317           | 31,7     | 19.946        | 100,0    |
| 1991         | 9.253              | 47,6     | 4.109           | 21,1     | 6.092           | 31,3     | 19.454        | 100,0    |
| 1992         | 8.913              | 44,7     | 4.640           | 23,2     | 6.405           | 32,1     | 19.958        | 100,0    |
| 1993         | 8.643              | 43,4     | 4.452           | 22,4     | 6.812           | 34,2     | 19.907        | 100,0    |
| 1994         | 9.023              | 44,3     | 4.473           | 21,9     | 6.900           | 33,8     | 20.396        | 100,0    |
| 1995         | 10.226             | 47,8     | 4.417           | 20,7     | 6.734           | 31,5     | 21.378        | 100,0    |
| 1996         | 9.962              | 45,9     | 4.734           | 21,8     | 7.002           | 32,3     | 21.698        | 100,0    |
| 1997         | 8.219              | 39,5     | 5.213           | 25,0     | 7.383           | 35,5     | 20.815        | 100,0    |
| 1998         | 9.149              | 41,8     | 5.059           | 23,1     | 7.702           | 35,2     | 21.909        | 100,0    |
| 1999         | 8.839              | 40,8     | 5.087           | 23,5     | 7.717           | 35,7     | 21.643        | 100,0    |
| 2000(*)      | 7.103              | 34,5     | 3738            | 18,2     | 9738            | 47,3     | 20.579        | 100,0    |
| 2001(*)      | 7.217              | 35,4     | 3734            | 18,3     | 9415            | 46,3     | 20.367        | 100,0    |
| 2003         | 7.165              | 33,9     | 3769            | 18,1     | 10135**         | 48,0     | 21.147        | 100,0    |

Source: DIE, Household Labour Survey Results.

\*: In these years 15 years old and older people have been taken into consideration.

\*\* : These figures include 965.000 construction workers.

Table 3. Paid Working Situation in Agricultural Sector

| Work Type                                | 2003               |              |
|--|--------------------|--------------|
|  | Person ( thousand) | %            |
| <b>1) Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery</b> | <b>7.165</b>       | <b>33,9</b>  |
| -Paid – daily wage                       | 389                | 1,9          |
| - Sef employed – employer                | 3.130              | 14,8         |
| - Unpaid household worker                | 3.646              | 17,2         |
| <b>2) Off Farming Activities</b>         | <b>13.982</b>      | <b>66,1</b>  |
| -Paid – daily wage                       | 10.319             | 48,8         |
| - Sef employed – employer                | 3.171              | 15,0         |
| - Unpaid household worker                | 492                | 2,3          |
| <b>3) Total (1+2)</b>                    | <b>21.147</b>      | <b>100,0</b> |

Source: DIE, Household Labour Survey Results -2003.

Table 4. The Rates of Contribution to Work Force in Turkey ( %)

| Those who Contribute to Work Force | The Rates of Contribution of Total Population to Working Force | The Rates of Contribution of Rural Population to Working Force | The Ratio of Agriculture in Rural Employment |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Total Population                   | 48,3   | 55,5   | 69,4   |
| Men                                | 70,4   | 72,9   | 55,5   |
| Women                              | 26,6   | 39,0   | 89,1   |

Source: DIE, Household Labour Survey Results -2003.

Table 5. Salary-wise Distribution of Agricultural Workers (%)

| Working Types                         | Toplam Tarım Nüfusu | Erkek        | Kadin        |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Unpaid household workers              | 50,9                | 25,1         | 81,4         |
| Sef employed – employer               | 43,7                | 68,8         | 15,9         |
| Paid, Salaried or daily waged workers | 5,4                 | 6,1          | 2,7          |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>100,0</b>        | <b>100,0</b> | <b>100,0</b> |

Source: DIE, Household Labour Survey Results -2003.

Table 6. Locational and Regional Poverty Rates (%)

| <b>Settlement Units and Regions</b> | <b>Absolute Poverty</b> | <b>Relative Poverty</b> | <b>Middle</b> | <b>Top (Upper)</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Urban                               | 2,8                     | 21,8                    | 39,0          | 36,4               |
| Rural                               | 9,3                     | 33,0                    | 36,7          | 21,0               |
| <b>Region</b>                       |                         |                         |               |                    |
| Marmara                             | 1,3                     | 18,3                    | 40,5          | 39,9               |
| Aegean                              | 2,6                     | 22,4                    | 46,7          | 28,2               |
| Mediterranean                       | 7,7                     | 29,5                    | 37,1          | 25,7               |
| Central Anatolia                    | 6,0                     | 28,1                    | 36,3          | 29,6               |
| Black Sea                           | 8,1                     | 31,0                    | 36,3          | 24,6               |
| Eastern Anatolia                    | 7,7                     | 32,0                    | 32,3          | 28,0               |
| Southeast Anatolia                  | 17,5                    | 45,2                    | 24,3          | 13,0               |

Source: DIE, 2002