

*Rural Development is a deliberate process
of sustained and sustainable
economic, social, political, cultural and
environmental change, designed to improve the
quality of life
of the local population of a rural region.*

Note

- the emphasis on a deliberate and sustained **process** : rural development is not a short-life affair : it needs to be pursued over a long period of years and in a deliberate way.
- the inclusion of **sustainability**
- the five other adjectives – economic, social, cultural, political and environmental – which show the width of the subject and the need to keep and take an **integrated** view : the word ‘political’ is included not in the sense of party politics, but because any effective rural development involves a growth of public awareness and confidence at local level and hence a subtle change in power relationships.
- The word **change** : rural development is not about protecting the status quo : it is about deliberate change in order to make things better.
- The focus on **improving the life of the local population**. Too much so-called ‘rural’ (or ‘regional’) development in the past has been motivated by national needs (e.g. for electricity, water, defence, or for contribution to the national balance of payments from tourism), rather than the needs of the rural people themselves. National needs may indeed be met in rural development, and any successful meeting of local needs will contribute indirectly to national well-being. But the modern concept of rural development has a prime emphasis on the needs of the local population.



Integrated rural development. What does it mean?

- the focus should be on society and economy and environment
- the development should be both “top-down” and “bottom-up” : it should embrace the policies, money and support of government (at all levels) and the energy, resources, and commitment of the people
- it should involve all sectors - public, private and voluntary
- it should be based on partnership and collaboration



Four 'legs' or 'pillars' of rural development.

To dramatise the idea of an integrated approach,
we offer the concept of
four legs or pillars of rural development.

- **The people, with their skills**
- **The economy**
- **The environment**
- **Ideas, institutions and power structures.**

They need to be kept in balance with each other
like the legs of a horse, or the pillars of a building



Community-based development

Rural development should be based on the interests, and the involvement, of the community living in the area.

By 'community', we mean all the people living in a given rural area.

They are the basis for sustainable rural development because:

- they know best what are their problems and needs;
- they control many of the resources - land, buildings, local products - upon which development is based;
- their skills, traditions, knowledge and energy are the main resource for development;
- their commitment is vital (if they do not support an initiative, it will die).

Moreover, the more lively and active a community is, the more likely it is to attract people to move into the area, and to keep people from moving away.



Sustainable development

*Development that meets the needs of the present generation
without compromising the ability of future generations to
meet their own needs*

Brundtland report, 1987

This is a useful starting–point for thinking about how rural development, or rural tourism, can be sustainable.

But it provides no basis for assessing whether a particular programme or project is truly sustainable.

We need a definition which assists such assessment, and which reflects the emphasis on an integrated and community-based approach.



Sustainability relates to all four of the 'legs' or 'pillars' of rural development - people, economy, environment and institutions.

People. To be sustainable, development must promote :

- Democracy and security;
- Fairness, or equity, including special help for the poor and a concern for women, children and ethnic minorities;
- Quality of life for all the people;
- Leadership by the people, in partnership with government; and
- Respect for the memory of ancestors, and for the rights of people not yet born.

Economy. To be sustainable, development must:

- Help to strengthen and diversify the economy of rural areas;
- Ensure that local people gain substantial benefit from the local activity;
- Look to the long-term prosperity of rural areas, rather than simply their short-term benefit; and
- Avoid harmful side-effects elsewhere in the national, regional or local economy.

Environment. To be sustainable, development must:

- Respect natural systems and the integrity of the environment;
- Minimise the use of non-renewable resources;
- Consume renewable resources no faster than nature can renew them;
- Make efficient use of all resources used; and
- Avoid causing pollution and other adverse impacts on the environment.

Institutions. To be sustainable, development must:

- Be within the capacity of human institutions to control and manage, in a way that meets the other criteria stated above; and
- Not be the source of unsupportable costs in the future.



Questions arising from chapter 1

1. What do you think are useful ideas in chapter 1 ?
What do you find not useful or irrelevant?
2. What kind of rural region do you live in or work for ?
3. Do you recognise the description (paragraphs 1.1 to 1.7) of the broad changes affecting rural areas?
4. Are there other events or processes that have affected development in your area?
5. What impact have these and other changes had upon your region?
6. What policies and programmes are in operation which affect the rural development in your region ?
7. At which geographic level – European, national, regional, local – are these policies and programmes being decided ?
8. What do you think of the principles and concepts stated in paragraphs 1.16 to 1.22?
9. Do they ring true when you think about your own work in, and experience of, rural development?

10. Can you improve upon the criteria for sustainability stated in paragraph 1.22 ?