

The REVA PLAN in Senegal: Does modern farming of change minds of young people about agriculture?¹

By

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Comments Welcome.

Introduction

Agriculture has always held a central position in Senegalese economy. In all areas of the country, agriculture was and still remains the solid prop of domestic economy.

Agriculture was given much attention by the colonial administration: successive governments have continued to develop agricultural schemes and programs.

However, never in the history of Senegal has there been a period richer in agriculture reform and programme development than that begun in 1999. The “Return to Agriculture Plan” or REVA plan is one key programme. Set up by the act n° 2006-1336 on 29th November 2006, the National Agency for the Return to Agriculture aimed at creating modern farms that would incite populations at large and most specifically young people to work the land. This was a big challenge because since the beginning of the crisis in the Senegalese agriculture in 1970, young people have been dropping this activity in favour of migration to Dakar or foreign countries.

This paper intends to see whether or not the implementation of the REVA plan has changed the way agriculture is perceived by the youth and if those young people in the programme really plan to follow this career. More precisely, we will try to answer the following questions:

- Did the engagement in modern farming through the REVA Plan change livelihoods of young people?
- Did this engagement change minds and views of young people about farming jobs?
- Did these changes lead young people to consider building a future in agriculture?

Three hypotheses are in line with those questions:

- First hypothesis: Young people engaged in modern farming through REVA Plan discover that agriculture can provide substantial incomes and that this discovery will change their minds and views about agriculture.
- Second hypothesis: The change of minds depends on social characteristics of young people (gender, age group, wealth class, origin of residence: rural/urban)
- Third hypothesis: The change of minds is associated with a re-consideration of their future engagement with farming.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with young people working on 11 farms set up by REVA plan. We also interviewed REVA staff along with the personnel in charge of training young people. So, 70 persons were interviewed in total. Two focus groups were formed. Three agriculture technicians posted on the REVA plan farms with four REVA plan executives were also interviewed.

The paper is structured as follows: First, a thorough presentation of REVA plan will be made in which we will question the context of its creation, its objectives, and its organisation. The subsequent sections deal with the changes and impacts of the modern farms on the youth's living conditions, on their mindset and their views about agriculture.

1.1 The Origins of the REVA plan: the Illegal Emigration Tragedy

The beginning of the REVA plan in 2006 coincided with a particular phenomenon in the country's migration history. The number of illegal migrants to the Canary Islands, belonging to Spain, reached a pick that year. Travel to the Canary Islands was risky for the boats that were generally used for fishing. Of course, most of the boats were equipped with GPS and driven by skilled skippers, but the duration of the trip (6 to 8 days), the informal aspect of the endeavour and the non-respect of the minimal security norms such as the loading capacity, the equipment (non systematic life boat wearing) all increased risk. Up to now, precise statistics are not available about the number of deaths from associated with these trips have been estimated at about 3,000. It is in that context that the REVA plan was launched. As a result, it is intimately linked with that tragedy as CL, the REVA Formation and Land Exploitation Director, explained:

“As we all know, the Agency was created as a result of the Illegal migration happening from Senegal to the Spanish Kingdom which caused many deaths, which has pushed the Head of State Abdoulaye Wade to say that as those who left for Spain, once there work on farms, so why not create those farms home to keep them here?”

An explicit objective of the REVA plan is “the *reinsertion of the youth in tarming jobs to fight against joblessness and illegal migration*”. That original link between illegal emigration and REVA plan helps to understand the role played by Spain and Morocco in the execution of the plan: both countries technically and financially supported the farms. Spain was the destination country while Morocco was a transit country because the emigration route crosses the Moroccan waters. Morocco, for instance was present on the day REVA was launched. Spain came afterwards and signed a financing protocol worth 23 million Euros, of which 10 million were allotted to REVA plan

Of the 11 farms in this study, one has been funded by the Moroccan cooperation agreement (Ngomene Farmin the rural community of Diass, Thies region) and another by the Spanish cooperation (Djilack farm in the rural community of Sindia, Thies region). A third farm (in Khombole, Thies region) was funded by Italian cooperation -- Italy too is a destination of illegal migrants from Senegal. Besides, the cooperation between Italy and Senegal was planned in the context of the activities of the European Agency for the Operative Cooperation on the Foreign Frontiers of the European Union members (Frontex).

1.2 Mission and Organisation Schedule

The REVA plan is in fact an agency. The agency policies started when Abdoulaye Wade came to power in 2000. By 2006, the REVA plan had 6 objectives:

- Increase the speed of land settlement
- Equip the new settlements
- Define and organise the agricultural working areas
- Engage young people in farming jobs to fight against illegal migration and unemployment
- Attract private investment
- Define the vocation of farming areas.

To these ends the REVA plan agency has four departments:

- Research, Settling and Infrastructures Department
- Formation and Exploitation Department
- Administration and Finance Department
- Informatics, monitoring and Evaluation Department.

Those directions, all under the authority of the Agency Manager are completed by private initiative cells.

The targeted areas by REVA plan are: Senegal River Valley, Big Coast, Mbour area, Kaffine and Niore departments, sylvo-pastoral area, Tambacounda Department and the South.

From the interview with the REVA staff, we learn that the choice of the sites was conditioned by several major factors. The first one is land availability and quality. The second is the accessibility of water (surface, and underground). The third element depends on the types of crops likely to be produced in that area. The proximity of an electricity source was also a requirement. To minimise start-up costs the REVA plan started with already existing and/or abandoned farms. Those farms located in the region of Thies had been set up by projects such as PMIA and AGETIP. The advantage in starting with those farms was that people could use the existing structure: the land was available, irrigation networks were already in place. In most cases the infrastructure simply needed some servicing.

It is the responsibility of the Informatics and Monitoring and Evaluation Department to define and coordinate the choice of people entitled to work on the farms. Criteria for the choice are collective, domestic and individual. At the collective level, the REVA plan, first of all, targets ‘youth from the area’. According to Chair of the Infrastructure and Exploitation Department, 80% of youth working on the farms are from neighbouring villages. In the targeting process, the REVA plan is particularly interested in areas stricken by rural exodus and illegal emigration. At the domestic level, young men are selected from households that are deemed eligible. To the Chair, however, in cases where the household has given out an important land surface, two or three young people may represent them. If a household gives out a large piece of land and does not have any youth to sit for them, an adult may then join. In fact, it is the rural community that

attributes the land via deliberation but those lands are from the property of families who offer them willingly.

A selection committee is set up involving and chaired by the “sous- prefect”. The other members are the President of the Rural Community, a representative the youth and one of the women, and one National Rural Agriculture Council representative. Thus, the process is meant to be participatory and inclusive.

The persons selected to work on a particular farm organise themselves in the form of an Intercompany Management Syndicate (IMS) of 20 to 25 persons. These IMSs, with the support of Economic Promotion Funds, receive loans from PMIA and Caisse Nationale de Credit Agricole (CNCA) for working capital.

2. The youth and agriculture: has the REVA plan has achieved a miracle?

At the start, the REVA plan was a laughing stock -- many people labelled it “Laugh plan” (Plan for fun or dream plan). The use of the word miracle is not overdone. If, after four years of experiment, it is proven that the approach developed on the REVA farms has changed both the living conditions and the idea young people have about agriculture, then we can truly speak of a miracle. In fact, even though agriculture -- whether for commercial or for food -- has always been the backbone of our local economies, it has been labelled worthless and hard, e.g, it does not give income that match the investment and efforts.

Agriculture based on the rains or on the flood also appears as a time restricted activity, lasting only for about three months per year. This leaves an extended idle period. Another characteristic of agriculture is the use of outdated production methods. The conception of agriculture as a cumbersome, exhausting and less rewarding or worthless activity dwells on the collective mindset of people living in the Senegal River valley as testifying in the words of Elhadj Omar: “*For sure, farming is a job and yet I wish my son Ahmadou would never pick it.*”

II.1 REVA plan: Breakaway from Fathers’ farming Ways?

Concretely, REVA plan has brought changes to farming. The first change is related to the farming calendar. In most places farming used to be dependent on the seasons. Whether it is about rain-fed farming, flood farming or coast farming, the cultivation time never exceeded three months, leaving most peasants with a period of time to idle around which they only make up by temporarily migrating in urban centres.

‘Undoubtedly I want to continue working with the REVA plan, because if I drop, I want be able to work in the dry season. Whereas with the Plan, we work in both seasons (Man, 35, Ngomene Farm)

“Yes, I have been working on my farm since my young age. Yet I believe that there is a big difference between farming now and then. Before REVA plan, we

only work in the rainy season. Now, we keep working thanks to the watering system. In addition, concerning the rain farming, we harvested only one time now we can do it many a time. My income have really increased” (Married woman, 32, Taïba Niassene)

“We were all farmers and children of farmers. Before, REVA plan, we worked in the rainy season and we would forsake farms in the dry seasons” (Married woman, 25)

The second change is in the use of new farming techniques. The farming methods resorted to by many young people were simple and rustic: the hoe for hard soils and the “iler” for soft and sandy grounds. That bachelor of 28 working on the Tivaouane farm remembers the working conditions in their market gardens before REVA plan:

“The tools we used were outmoded. We had watering cans, seed-bags and all the job was by hands”

The REVA plan offered new farming techniques to the youth. Among those methods, one can list both drip and sprinkler irrigation.

“The difference between REVA plan and our method lies on the tools. The REVA fields are well equipped, ploughed and they have fertilizers. Conversely, around here, every one to their own ways” (Man, 32, Kirène)

The use of modern techniques impacts the working conditions and on the whole appears to make them less exhausting. Many of the young people interviewed insisted on the fact that the hard work of traditional farming had been alleviated:

“Comparing the job once before REVA plan and nowadays, I daresay the work is less tiring” (Man, single 28, Tiwaouane Peulh farm)

“The job was really different now. The job was very hard as a result of the little means in hand and the lack of equipment” (Man, 31, level, Middle School, Kirene Farm)

The fourth change concerns the use of new farming methods. For ages, in the REVA implemented areas, the main crops were food crops: millet, sorghum and cowpea. The Colonial power added groundnuts to the mix. For a couple of centuries, people have been producing those crops. REVA, in proposing new crops, has brought about a big change, including the introduction of vegetable crops (cabbage, tomato, red pepper, gombo, green peas, and eggplants) and fruit (melon and water melons). The interest in this diversity resides in the production of high added value products such as green peas and water melon partly for the foreign market on some specific farms (for there are farms supplying the local market only). Better, the innovation lies in the flexibility of production because farmers may produce to meet the needs of the market. In fact, as CL, REVA Director of

Formation and Exploitation, says, the agency has connected the farmer to specific channels of distribution:

“It is also our responsibility to find partners for them, with whom, they work, sometimes we have promoters for the exploitation, because at this level we have managed to facilitate them the transactions between promoters and farmers so that they can sign a production and trade contract. Once, the contract has been signed out, the promoters orders the products he needs to export and, under our guidance, he sets the route and we force the promoter to follow exactly the chosen technical route and we obliged the farmer to stick to the same rules; because, the promoter know well his machines and draws out his itinerary and we have to respect that respect that itinerary for the product to meet the requirements of the target market.”

Another change concerns the training technique. In fact, if in history of Senegalese agriculture, the technical training of peasants has always been a key component of every programme and initiative (ONCAD, SAED, PRODAM; ANCAR etc), what is new with REVA is that the coaching is very close in the sense that there one technician for each farm. These technicians graduated either from Camberene Horticultural School or from Ziguinchor Agricultural Technique Training School. After a placement time, they are given either a limited time working contract or an unlimited working contract. As a 32 year old farming advisor said, his work consists of:

- Represent the agency on the farm
- Providing technical assistance to farmers
- Taking charge of equipment maintenance
- Making sure the concession contract is respected
- Make sure farmers organize themselves well
- Seeing to the insurance of producers on the farms and nearby

The last change consists of creating or recreating social areas in the vicinity of the farm so that the farm area becomes an extension of village and its social life. To set up those areas of solidarity, REVA plan staff members has developed a participative approach giving freedom to the farm workers to join together according to their own likings. This approach was well explain by sociologist Mame Binta incharge of Monitoring and evaluation of REVA plan.

“ Yes, we give out the last list (of workers) to village people and then they gather in intercompany Management syndicate (IMS) and the formation process begins and they set up IMS and we tell them to organize themselves because they know each other better than we do, because either, they from the same village or they have tea together. They get together according to their affinity. What matters is that we have IMS of 20 people. It is only in Ngomene that we have had IMS of 25 people”.

The goal is that the farm becomes a socializing area where young people bring food to share, and it becomes a destination for guests and for tea drinking. In that respect, that

participative approach addresses the repulsion and the constraints that have always been attached to farming activities. This approach favours a new view of farming among young people, which is prerequisite for a return to the farming sector.

III.2 REVA plan and change of youth living conditions: different viewpoints

The changes brought about by REVA plan are no doubt real. The farming methods, the organization of the work, the inter connexion between the production area, the distribution chain and the trading have resulted into changes that are, however, perceived differently by young people working on the farms

For some young people working of the farms the most important gain from REVA plan is surely the regular and substantial income. In the past, farmers had incomes one time during the year from one seasonal crop but with REVA plan, the possibility of several agricultural campaigns in a year help people earn money on a more regular basis.

Those substantial income gains are due to many factors including, the production of high added value crops, the use to very sophisticated production methods, the use of fertilizers and mostly, the connexions with European markets. It was rare to earn as much money from traditional farming methods with for instance the millet only destined to local food and in any case the crop gave only a small surplus for trade.

For a young married men 27 of age who works on Diagle farm, circumstances have really changed:

“Among all the crops, maize was most important. We used to eat part of the harvest and the other was sent to Dakar for sale. After sale, we could have just more than one hundred thousand CFA; however people used to borrow and seldom paid back; you had to go after them.... I have willingly come to work on the farm. The first campaign we have grown aubergines, Diakhatou, red pepper. I have been on the farm for one year and my pay like the others is 120,000 CFA F; It is an important sum. With that money I paid a bag of rice for the family and gave some money to my kinsmen. It was interesting because rain farming did not permit to earn money in the dry season”

Earnings vary according to farms and even within the same farm, from one crop to another

“After each onion campaigns we may have 900,000 FCFA” (Man, 28, Single, Tivaouane Peulh)

“The income depend on the needs, it depends on the market, by roughly, I have 400,000 to 5,000,000 for the Bissap and almost the same amount for the aubergine. Yes I can earn 1,000,000 a year” (Man, 35, Single, Kirene Farm)

Box 1: Interview with Cheikh LO, Agronome, Responsible for the REVA plan Direction of Formation and Exploitation

For example, the Ngomene farm that is 65 ha, for the first campaign, people have worked and have earned 100 million, they have shared. Each has had more than one million. On Djilakh Farm of 50 ha, after work each has had 700,000 and 800,000 CFA. At Darou Ndoeye farm, a small exploitation of 12 ha, the intensified farming made people work 12 months on a row... They earned 1,200,000. Take a farm such as Tivaouane Peulh where people did not work hard for a year, people have earned 400,000. So the harder the work the more they earn. Now this boils down to the fact that whoever used a room in Dakar prefers to stay home, among his people and family and kids and may get 75,000 to 80,000 per month, I think that such a person won't migrate anywhere else.

The important earnings provide an added boost to youth in the sense that family farms were used in common, whereas working in the REVA farms give young people incomes directly permitting them to implement their individual projects. This, for example, is the case of a young man who hopes to find the resources to enable him to get married:

"I have being very hopefully for REVA plan. Besides, I intend to get married with my incomes from the farm. The red Pepper campaign and that of... Have been very good. When I was working in the Walo fields, I could not make more than 75000 CFA F" (Man, 34, Gabakh Farm I)"

If using farming incomes for common needs such as food, health expenses or ceremonies (weddings, naming ceremonies) was common, the achievement of large, individual projects like constructing a cement house ding was not part of the story. Generally, the money used for those undertaking was from formal or informal jobs in town or from money transfer from international migration. Now things have changed:

"Many terraces (cement houses) in the village are funded from the farm incomes. I believe that a young man make it through agriculture. I can give you the example of a friend who built his house from the money earned for watering plots" (Man, 28, Single, Tivaouane Peulh Farm)

The building of a cement house is symbolic in Senegal because it stands for social success. The first sign of success for a migrant is the building of such a cement house (Bredeloup, 2007: 201-202;Sall, 2008:215). Seen from this angle, agriculture via the REVA model can be as important as migration in fulfilling the dreams of young people:

"Aspirations are not just about economic opportunity – status is important: agriculture is unappealing to young people because it does not bring status regardless of economic outcomes" (Proctor and Lucchesi, 2012:35)

Apparently, the involvement of women in the REVA plan has changed their living conditions and has increased their social status. Working on the REVA plan farms, the woman earns incomes equal to those of men, which helps her satisfy needs and create independent:

“I am very happy with the plan because it meets our expectations; my life has changed a lot thanks to REVA, now I make money and I can help my parents, I buy furniture and clothes. I wish this plan will continue for long. Last year, I was once given 50000. Our friends have a different opinion of us now. They sometimes borrow money from me” (Woman, 31, 4 children, Taiba Niassene Farm)

However, despite the breaks in tradition brought about by the REVA plan and the innovations in the farming domain, some young people involved remain doubtful and disappointed by it. Some young people point to the insufficiency of the incomes from farming: they are not sufficient to help them satisfy their individual and domestic needs. If low incomes have been sometimes associated with the weakness of harvests, parasites attacks (worms in the case at Tivaouane Peulh), the low revenues were also attributed to the mode of work and how income was distributed. In fact the number of people sharing the income was in some cases high. The intercompany management syndicate (IMS) include a minimum of 20 people. After each harvest charges (for fertilizer and pesticides, fuel for irrigation, pay for agriculture workers (“Sourghas”) tractor rent on farms like Ngomene and the expenses for carrying the products to markets) are deducted. What remains is divided by the number of IMS members. Sometimes, a share may be divided among two persons, reducing in the process the individual gain. This abnormal situation shows the weaknesses of a system which empowers local committees. Examining drop out cases highlights some of the weaknesses of the farms management.

The number of drop out cases is noticeable. Ngomene farm is a case in point. For the REVA plan staff, the case is specific. In fact, through an agreement between the office for Young Suburban People and REVA plan, young people from Dakar suburbs were found to work on Ngomene farm. Some of them could not adjust to the living conditions in rural areas and they decided to drop out. Those drops show weaknesses in the REVA plan that many young people are criticizing.

Some of them stress the fact that those who dropped out in order to go to town keep their status as REVA farm workers by engaging others “on the black market” to be farm workers “sourghas”. These “Sourghas” after toiling hard have to share the income with “Sunday farmers” or “missing farmers” who live from the ground rent. From 1960 to the present, the spirit and the creed of land reforms initiated by the different governments have been “the land to those who work it”. In offering, even tacitly, to young people the possibility to keep their official belonging to the farm even though they are away and make other people work as sharecroppers, the REVA plan adopt a custom that keeps youth away from farming. A young woman informant from Darou Ndoeye farm said:

“Before the advent of REVA plan, I used to farm. I watered plants in other’s fields for a pay after each campaign. In other words, we proceeded to what is known as “rem peccen” (I work on your farm and we share the crops); that is to say the land belonged to other people who hired me for watering. After the harvest, charges are cut off and benefits were evenly shared. I was also farm worker “sourgas” in market gardens. However, I have never owned any land, I have

always worked for others. Since I started working on the REVA plan farm, I have dropped all my other activities. I keep on having a plot in the “Diery” but as it does not rain enough, I am not working on it. This is my first year on the farm. I am replacing a beneficiary who abandoned. However, his name is on the list of beneficiaries. I think it unjust to see his name on the list when he is away doing something else. After each harvest, we share the product whereas he works in Dakar. One may say I am his “Sourga”. There is a lot of injustice in the land attribution. Since my arrival at the farm I have earned 20,000 CFA F because the plot I am working on yields only 40,000 CFA F that I share with the owner in Dakar” (Man, 32 , Darou Ndoye Woman)

Besides, if the approach consisting of gathering similar people together to form an IMS has positive aspects, it also has some that are negative. In reality, the lack of clear rules about how the tasks are organised favour an unfair sharing of work: some work much harder than others and ultimately the lazy ones are better paid:

“They are many lazy bone people on the farm that is why we do not make enough money. I wish each beneficiary exploits their own plot on the farm to avoid having some work for others” (Man, 32, Married, Darou Ndoye Farm)

Some of the critics of the REVA plan are themselves disappointed young people. To get their interest, the plan promised many things. Some like the guarantee of a whole year’s work was respected, but many others were not. In fact some young people were attracted by the prospect of working with partners on the basis of precise specifications. That partnership would avoid farmers having to deal with some of the same worries which have troubled Senegalese farmers for decades. In fact, a case in point is the producers of local onions, rice and tomato in the Senegal River Valley. A promise was made by authorities to block onion import from Netherlands but some think it was not keep:

“What really motivate my coming to REVA were the promises to work with partners. After I decided to stay because I was convinced. But I have been really disappointed because ever since we have not seen anything about those promises and we were disappointed” (Man, 29, Ndiéguene Farm)

In other cases, the partnerships were initiated but they have not been to the likings of farmers because the level of pay was not respected as promised.

II.3 A Career in Agriculture?

Four years after the launch of the REVA plan, one may venture an answer to the question of whether it opens new doors in terms of careers for young people in agriculture. Three categories of young people can be identified.

The first category consists of some diehards who having picked the farming as a job, keep thinking of it as “a job by default”, meaning there was little if any choice. Generally in this category we find the most educated, like the young people from suburban areas already mentioned. In fact, to those people farming is a springboard job readily

abandoned for the first better opportunity. These ideas of a 25-year old youth from Tivaouan Peulh farm illustrates the fact that farming is seen as a temporary job:

“I dropped the farm for learning masonry. I made enough money but farming is not a real job. That is why I went to learn masonry. I only wanted to make some money from farming but not having any job experience. It is the case of many young people. In Tivaouan Peulh, young people are not interested in farming. Given a choice I would never work in Farming”

The second category consists of farmers with another job. They organize their schedule so as to alternate among the two activities. There are predominately traders and workman. That double job entails the reinvestment of gains from first job in the second:

“I had 53,000 CFA F from the first three months tomato campaign in the dry season. The gombo campaign gave me 20,000 CFA F in 3 months. It has not worked well this year due to costs and insects. Thanks to the incomes I have bought articles to supply my shop at the market where I sell cosmetics and shoes. Before coming to the farm I stay there until 12.00 or I come after lunch. That is my schedule. It is then the project that has helped me fund that activity” (Man, 18, Khombole Farm)

The third category consists of those who have known about agriculture but mostly via the REVA programme which as we have seen can generate more income. That category includes many women – the REVA income gives them financial autonomy and increased social status.

From the analysis of the data collected, we see that young people can envisage having a career in farming under certain conditions, like when there is a break from the old farming ways.

The first condition for agriculture to be attractive is that it should guarantee sustainable incomes and a break from that exhausting and low wage farming of their father.

The second condition consists of a sufficient supply in material means: irrigation and planting machinery plus farm inputs such as fertiliser.

The third condition is about guaranteed access to markets. It was the certitude of partnership and markets that encouraged many young people to enter farming jobs. In addition, partners must respect the terms of their agreements and avoid any cheating.

Another condition relates to the management problems evoked by young people. While the REVA agency pretends that the rules of work sharing are established ahead of time (with each knowing their work turn), young people lay the blame on the fact that everyone does not make the same effort. Some come late and leave before the right allotted time. Others are said to be bone-lazy. Finally the case of those who remain as

members while they are away is critical, because they unfairly share the farm benefits with those who actually work without any official recognition.

The last but one condition is the need for each young person to own a plot. Many believe that that a feeling of ownership would be highly motivating:

“Many factors justify the choice of many young people for farming. My case is an example, if I know that both the farm and its fruits are mine I will optimise its production” (Man, 32, Kirene)

“I think it would better making each own their plot according to the REVA spirit formerly decided but not yet implemented because the land is common. The low production discourages young people most often” (Man, 29, Ndiegene Farm)

A final condition relates to communication issues, particularly around the image of successful young farmers. These last years, the image of success has been conveyed through young successful icons in sport (football, wrestling), in arts (music) and politics. To be attractive, farming should yield and exhibit its own role models as expressed by a 19-year old girl of 19 from Tivaouane Peulh farm:

“For me, you cannot earn a good living from farming. It is just a pastime for I have never seen someone earning enough money from that job”

All those conditions will need to be addressed for a successful return by young people to agriculture.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the goal of leading young people into farming is critical for at least two reasons. The first relates to social justice because the State has the duty to help thousands of young people to find employment. Without work they move toward illegal emigration. The second reason is the necessity to capture the demographic dividend. In fact, with Sub-Saharan engaged today in the demographic transition, the active population, in a short term, will increase which offers possibilities of capturing that demographic dividend. As are shown by several works (Bloom, Canning and Malaney, 2000; Bloom, Canning and Sevilla, 2003; Williamson, 1998), access to jobs by the young active population is one of the four conditions of capturing that dividend.

In choosing to bring young people back to farming, the REVA plan sought to address a herculean challenge. In fact, to the young Senegalese, agriculture stands for work that is archaic, tiresome and poorly rewarded – the opposite of illegal migration. To bring them back to agriculture that vision must change. That is what the REVA plan wanted to achieve: use of modern irrigation techniques, intensive farming, input use, access to the credit, land owning security, partnership with markets for the selling of products, a revival of solidarity and so forth.

After the first four years of work on the farms, it seemed that a return to agriculture and to the villages housing the REVA farms can be noticed, at least by some:

“I have noticed that the mosque filled up with disciples at praying time. Before the farm was setup in the village, only two or three persons answered the call for prayers, now people barely find room. This is a sign of a move back to agriculture, meaning, many people have returned to their village to work as farmers.”

The REVA plan has showed to the youth that another type of agriculture was possible, different from that of their fathers. In working on these modern farms where irrigation techniques were used, the work is all the year through, where they have entitlements (to capital, land security), work in partnerships and have access to local or foreign markets -- a new view of agriculture is on offer.

Likewise, the work on REVA plan farms has allowed many young people to earn substantial incomes for domestic expenses but also to satisfy individual needs. Better incomes have helped build houses, which was previously only feasible with earnings from illegal international migration. Those incomes have also made women more economically independent and increased their social status.

Proctor and Lucchesi (2012: 35) concluded that the REVA plan is a full success insofar as it has contributed to a change of mentalities about agriculture.

If that change of mentalities about agriculture did not convince a handful of diehards who do not intend to have a long career in the field, others are convinced and are prepared to consider a future career in farming provided some reforms are brought about.

Among the reforms, we can list the production increase partly conditioning the income increase. For some people, these incomes are still low. The benefits drawn from the activity remain low after the various charges are withdrawn. It is then necessary to think about the way to reduce the charges. It is also important to reconsider the mode of work organization that entails an even sharing of benefits in the group while efforts are not equal. It is also necessary to reform the situation of those who have dropped out of the programme. At the moment it perpetuates the vulnerability of workers in “Black Markets” who do not have any status and any social recognition and who are obliged to share the benefits with others who have not made any effort. The Youth Report de 2012 indicts the problem:

“The core challenge for these countries is to not only generate new employment opportunities for young people, but to also improve the quality of all jobs available to them”.

Another condition is related to the necessity for the REVA plan help young farmers locate credible partners who can help in the selling of the products for a good price.

A last but one condition is that young people strongly yearn for possessing their own plot, which is a condition for them to invest and work hard accordingly to their ambitions

Finally, a communication strategy to show successful young farmers in modern agriculture is necessary to change people’s minds about farming as a career.

The REVA experience shows that when the doors of migration that have made young people dream, and that keep young people dreaming, are firmly locked, their return to agriculture is possible provided their expectations are satisfied.

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