Development Framework for Agro-Based Industries in Secondary Cities of Sindh Province, Pakistan: SWOT Analysis of Ten-Year Perspective and Medium-Term Development Framework Plans

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Abstract: The study intended to explore planning strategies gaps in ten-year perspective and medium-term development framework plans for agro-based industrial development in secondary cities of Sindh Province, Pakistan. Document review and key informant interviews survey techniques were used for data collection. A total of 30 interviews were conducted from agro-based officials. The SWOT analysis technique was applied for data analysis. The results revealed the weaknesses of high priority for textile and sugar industries, lack of planning strategies for agro-based development in secondary cities, dependency on federal government for development funds and absence of finances to implement plans. The threats were unavailability of strategic agro-based infrastructure facilities in secondary cities, centralized planning system, cross border threats such as the war in Afghanistan and migration of Afghan refugees, weak law and order situation and diversion of development budget for defense activities. The study suggests decentralization of powers and robust planning strategies in the development plans to strengthen secondary cities of Sindh Province economically.

Keywords: secondary cities; planning strategies; agro-based industrial development; ten-year perspective plan; medium-term development framework; SWOT analysis; Sindh Province; Pakistan

1. Introduction

It is an entrenched reality that urban areas whether metropolitan or secondary cities are engines of regional economic growth [1–3]. Secondary cities and intermediate urban centers, especially, play a dynamic role in the economic development of a region. The consensus of policymakers and regional planners is that secondary cities serve as the regional service centers and are major contributors for rural development [4–6]. Secondary cities integrated into the national and regional economies tend to flourish and stimulate more economic growth and create job opportunities. Juan (2014) claimed that “secondary cities are the emerging engine of the rapid pace urbanization the world will experience in the forthcoming decades” [7] (p. 2).

It is also a well-established factor that agro-based industrial development plays a strategic role in the economic growth and development of a country [8]. Agro-based industries are potentially strong in providing farming and off-farm employment opportunities to rural and urban inhabitants [9]. Off-farm activities include processing, handling, packaging, transporting and marketing of agricultural products and by-products [10,11]. Therefore, agro-based industrial development has a significant