

Abstract for “Structural Change in Africa: 1960-2010”

Gaaitzen de Vries (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

Klaas de Vries (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

Marcel Timmer (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

This paper examines growth in Africa since 1960. We present a novel database, the Africa Sector Database, with annual time series of value added and persons employed for the ten main sectors of the economy. The dataset covers 11 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa spanning the period from 1960 to 2010. It is based on an in-depth country-by-country study of available statistics and careful linking procedures to ensure internal, intertemporal and international consistency. Structural change, defined as the reallocation of labour across sectors, was sluggish until the 1990s. Since 1990 we find that workers reallocate to above-average productivity sectors, but with below-average productivity growth. We also show that African labour productivity levels in manufacturing are increasingly falling behind the world frontier and faster than other sectors. It dropped from 21 per cent in 1980 to 8 per cent in 2010. The scope for catch-up growth is higher than ever.