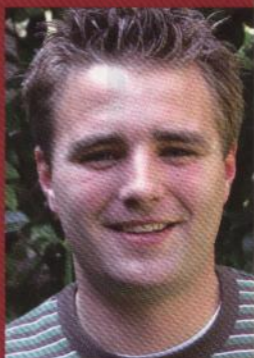


Which of the two is a third-world country?



Ethiopia has always been recognised as one of the poorest countries in the world. Many people are

asking me how it is possible to grow roses in the desert, not aware of the fact that a large part of Ethiopia is located above 1,500 metres altitude. According to the NGOs, this year Ethiopia has been struck again by a lot of hunger. Up to now I haven't seen any signs of this, but probably in the inaccessible outer corners of Ethiopia there have been some problems.

Where NGOs are trying to raise funds for their own (mainly) short-term solutions, the Ethiopian government is trying to increase life standards by long-term solutions. Roads are being improved, companies are springing up everywhere, because the government has recognised the need for a strong economy. A striking example is the policy of the government to give good incentives for investing companies, like flower growers. These not only act as very big employers, but also by importing, huge amounts of euros and dollars are gained. In the Netherlands, the government seems to think the other way around. A small minority of environmental activists seem to have a lot of power in our government. Often measures are taken which hamper economic growth. With the worldwide recession, the Dutch government is deciding to raise taxes and develop all kinds of rules. Some examples: VAT will be increased by 1%. A packaging tax is developed. Flight tickets are subject of CO₂-emission taxes. In Holland we have the most expensive fuel because of taxes. Most of these decisions have been said to be made in order to reduce negative effects on the environment, but are mainly used for other purposes. The environment is just used as a cash cow.

Especially floriculture in the Netherlands is suffering. Gas prices are set to increase in the coming year by 100%, and the government is making life even more difficult by making extra rules. Having a business in the Netherlands is becoming more and more frustrating, thanks to our government.

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