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## Socio-Economic Assessment of Arid Land Farming and Rural Development — A Case from Lake Nasser Region in Egypt

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### Abstract

Continuing increase of population and very limited land resources form a serious problem for the development possibilities in Egypt. Nearly the entire population lives on 4% of the territory particularly on the Nile Delta and Valley which are narrow with limited capacity for further extension. Hence, the government's policy was directed to establish new settlements to extend the cultivated area through arid land reclamation. One of the main destinations for such extension and development was Lake Nasser area, because it has a high economic potential and population absorption capacity.

To ensure the establishment of suitable and sustainable development strategies for the area, this study assesses the actual socio-economic conditions of the already settling population, to better understand the obstacles to and advantages of settling in the area. The results may form the basis to better support the settlement activities in the area.

A focus is given to the socio-economic situation of the farm-families in the area. Therefore, the Farming Systems Approach was adopted to assess the socio-economic situation of the settling populations around Lake Nasser area with special emphasis on their potentials and problems. The data was collected through a survey by using a standardised questionnaire to 100 systematically selected families from two of the most potential villages in the area.

The current results showed that the families settling in the area differ in their socio-economic characteristics according to their settling behaviour. Accordingly they were classified into three classes: permanent families, seasonal farmers and occasional visitors. The economic analysis showed that the seasonal farmers are the most successful group because they have the highest farm income, they were the best to repay their financial obligations and they have the highest cash surplus. They were followed by the permanent families while the occasional farmers came last. Socially, the permanent families are the most affected group with inefficient social conditions and infrastructures in the area. The social conditions in the area do not have a big impact on the other two groups because they come to the area only for economic activities and have their main household elsewhere.

**Keywords:** Egypt, land reclamation, living standards, resources use, rural development, socio-economic analyses