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Socio Economic Impact of Irrigation Project on Living Standard of Farming Population in North - Syria

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Abstract

Rainfall is the main water source for agriculture in the arid and semi-arid areas. The low rainfall and the non constant quantities over the year caused low agricultural yields and consequently low farm and family income of farming communities.

Syria is one of those countries where irrigation plays an important rule to increase the agricultural production. Therefore, many land reclamations projects were conducted through expansion of irrigated areas with building channels. This study investigates the impact of irrigation project in West —Maskana area on the living standard of farming population existing in the area.

75 farming families were randomly selected. 50 farmers were selected from the project area while the other 25 were selected from outside the project area. This stratified random sampling was used as a basis for classification to enable the comparison between project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

The current results of the economic analysis of different farming systems showed that irrigation project has increased the land productivity 9–12 times and consequently the farm income has also increased. Additionally the analysis showed that the contribution of farm income in the family income has increased to reach more than the half of the family income.

The main reason behind this fact is the high level of availability of irrigation water. Therefore, families outside the project area have directed their resources towards off-farm activities. Results showed that the contribution of off-farm income of non beneficiaries farming families in their family income is 71 %.

In general, water availability enhanced the agricultural intensification. Results showed significant differences in crop intensity between different farming systems. Crops intensity indicator was 143 % in the beneficiaries' farmer group while it was only 92 % in the non-beneficiaries farmers group.

Keywords: Farming systems, irrigation projects, Syria