



Tropentag, October 11-13, 2006, Bonn

“Prosperity and Poverty in a Globalised World—  
Challenges for Agricultural Research”

## Do Farmers Manage their Irrigation System after Transfer of Responsibilities? lessons from Uzbek Water Users Associations.

DARYA ZAVGORODNYAYA

*University of Osnabrück, Germany*

### Abstract

The process of irrigation water reforms on farmers' behaviour in Uzbekistan is analysed. The research question addressed the design, implementation and further activities of water users associations (WUA) as the water supply organisation connecting governmental and farmers' responsibilities.

Qualitative data was collected by semi-structured interviews, primary observations, participatory rural approach and standardised questionnaire while focusing on stakeholders' perception towards WUAs. Stakeholders consisted of local officials, scientists, local and international experts and members of WUAs. Special attention was placed on the functioning of WUAs' during 2003 to 2005. By 2004 the average irrigated area of the WUAs in Khorezm was 2 400 ha, and the average number of WUA members was 143 irrigators. The range of the irrigated land of WUAs in Khorezm varies from 1 232 ha (in Pitnayk) to 4 096 ha (in Gurlen). The minimum number of WUA members (45 farmers) was observed in Pitnayk, the maximum in Shavat, where one WUA includes 240 farmers.

The results showed that the functioning of a WUA depended on a score of managerial topics, qualifications which lacked WUA's, farmers' and state's sides all together. WUAs have been created by a strong top-down approach causing weak decision-making and low acceptance from members. Members suffered from a lack of information about the purposes and roles of WUAs. The state did not liberalise prices on agricultural commodities . The result showed furthermore that farmers followed own rules of (non-)coping with the newly established WUAs, such as a developed social networking between members of a WUA. This was rooted in the historical, traditional and post-soviet experience of irrigation systems management. The lack of possibilities to determine the type and amount of their production or to sell agricultural products on markets of their choice, does obstruct a smooth and rapid adaptation of farmers to a WUA imposed by the administration.

**Keywords:** Participatory management, transition