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Studying the Expansion of Olive Plantations into Syrian Dry Areas to Assist in Preparing a Suitable Agriculture Extension Program for the Olive Farmers in these Areas

MAZEN ALKHATEEB, HERMANN BOLAND

Justus Liebig University, Institute of Rural Sociology and Extension, Germany

Abstract

Since the last decade of last century, developments have taken place in Syrian dry areas by expanding the olive agriculture. As result of that, the number of olive trees has increased rapidly by 50 % across Syria. This study carried out in the Salamieh area in the middle of Syria, which includes 165 villages approximately. The agriculture and livestock breeding are considered to be as main economic activities in this area. Due to the lack of water in Salamieh area the production of irrigated crops like wheat and cotton were restricted to specific areas, while the number of olive trees recently increased dramatically with a growth rate of 18 % in 2007. Accordingly, the main objectives of this paper is to study the status of olive farming in the agro-climatic zones in Salamieh area, and to suggest policy recommendations, which are necessary for preparing an integrated extension programme for the olive farmers. The study based on primary data, which was collected from 114 farmers in 25 villages randomly by means of questionnaire during season 2006–2007. Results showed that the local olive's varieties (Surani, Kaisi), supplemental irrigation, fertilisation and the alternate bearing, affected the average of olive production. Moreover, there was a lack of sufficient experience in the field of olive by some farmers, 40 % from the age composition of the olive trees was 5–10 years old, and there was an adoption of modern irrigation techniques. Considering the fact that 50 % of farms size is 0.5–1 ha together with high costs of production; this shows the urgent need of preparing an agriculture extension programme for the olive's farmers. It will be in cooperation with the government and the other non-government organisations to help farmers in the all stages of the olive production, in addition to milling and marketing of the production, which would increase the farm income in the study area.

Keywords: Dry zones, extension programme, olive trees, Syria