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“Competition for Resources in a Changing World:
New Drive for Rural Development”

Impact Assessment of Maskana Irrigation Project on Economic Situation of Farming Families in Northern Syria

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Abstract

Syria, like many countries in the Near East is characterised by a high population growth rate. This has led to increased demand for agricultural products. Farmers in Northern Syria compete for the scarce water resources. To increase agricultural production in this region, there is a need to increase water availability through improvement and expansion of irrigation. As a result, living standards of the target groups will be expected to improve.

The Maskana Irrigation Project in northern Syria was initiated in 1990. Many feasibility studies have been done aiming at extending the project to other areas. This paper focuses on development of future strategies that could improve the impact of the project on living standards of the farming families. These strategies were established based problems identified by farmers during the survey and also from findings of previous analysis of the farming systems in the project area. Impact analysis of these strategies was done through simulation with static models at family level based on linear programming.

Testing and simulation of the strategies established the importance of vegetables production in improving farm and family income. The size of the herd also indicated an impact on family income. Results also indicated that with improved water availability, farm income would increase by more than 100%. Implementation of the irrigation would lead to full utilisation of the available and underutilised production units such as capital and family labour in farming activities. Due to water scarcity, the farmers had actually diverted these inputs to off-farm activities. However, investment in increased water availability had a significantly positive impact on farm income up to a certain level of the cultivated land after which the impact was negative.

Keywords: development strategies, Syria, water scarcity