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## Socio-economic Characteristics of Rice-based Agroecosystems in Mazandaran, North of Iran

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### Abstract

Sustainability of agricultural systems can be defined as a set of activities which results in supplying food and fiber demands of current generation, while not limiting future generations' ability to meet such their needs. In order to study the socioeconomic characteristics of rice-based agroecosystems and its implications for sustainability of these systems, a survey was conducted in Mazandaran, northern Iran. Data were collected using 278 questionnaires. The questionnaires passed the validity test and filled by interview with farmers in the rice-based agroecosystems. Social indicators were farmers' age, educational level, family size and family working, land tenure and farm size, accessibility to production inputs, financial supports and education and extension services. Economic indicators were farmers' income from crop production, animal husbandry, handicrafts and non-agricultural income. Results showed that the mean farmer's age of rice growers in Mazandaran was 54.5 years. 58 percent of farmers were 51 and older. More than 30 % of farmers are illiterate and only 4.6 % of them having academic education. Mean family size in the present study was 5.4 and size of more than 82 % of families was 4 and bigger and in 73.4 % of agroecosystems, farmers act as family working. Results of the present study showed that mean farm size of rice growers in Mazandaran was 0.95 ha. More than 86 % of rice farms were less than or equal 2 ha. In average, 73 % of farmers' income was earned by crop production. Results of present study draw a comprehensive picture of socioeconomic condition of rice-based agroecosystems in Mazandaran, Iran.

**Keywords:** Education, farm income, sustainable agriculture