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Food Security Versus Water Security: A Policy Related Study about Iran

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Abstract

The Iranian government puts strong emphasis on the strategy of food security and in that context aims to reach self sufficiency in wheat production. This strategy is due to the daily growing population and the increase in demand-to-production capacity relation, as well as the political desire to be independent from other countries food supply.

The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, macro policies and general development programs strongly emphasise, directly and implicitly, food security. To reach wheat self-sufficiency level the government concentrates on wheat production increase strategies. Therefore, the Iranian government in particular intervenes into wheat production and wheat marketing by a policy of guaranteed minimum prices, exchange rate interventions, product insurances against natural hazards, tariff protection, input subsidies, output subsidies and cheap credit.

Over the last years, the Government has especially powered the policy of guaranteed purchase price. Higher wheat prices should motivate farmers to increase wheat production level. Wheat production increase pressure on the ground-water resources especially in arid and semi-arid areas. This pressure is eroding the long term sustainability of water resources and water security.

This paper studies the sustainability of wheat self-sufficiency and water related policies at macro level. It focuses on the constitution, macro policies and general development programs and plans of Iran. It presents the Iranian government plans and laws regarding food security and food self-sufficiency policies on one hand, and the water related policies on the other hand, using a literature review as well as secondary data, collected from governmental organisations of Iran. Evaluation of the collected data is based on Revealed Preferences Approach. Share of the governmental budget allocated for each policy is used, as an indicator, to weight the importance and priority of the related policy.

Keywords: Food self-sufficiency, sustainability, water resources, wheat