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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

## Large-Scale Irrigation Projects in Northern Peru and their Social, Economic and Environmental Effects

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### Abstract

The decade of the 90's in Peru was characterised by performing an institutional change supported by drastic neoliberal reforms at the state and economic level aiming in essence at stabilising the critical socio and economic situation. The agricultural sector faced an institutional change reflected by the end of state monopoly and the liberalisation of agricultural land. In fact, the promotion of private investment in public services and infrastructure allowed important public-private partnerships in the Peruvian coast which involved water treatment and irrigation systems like the Chavimochic project. This case has been evaluated for demonstrating the effects of the lack of awareness in respecting natural resources.

This project was supported as a panacea for drought due to the changing climatic conditions of the coastal region and its big agricultural potential. Chavimochic is structured for covering water deficit, making thousands of former inactive hectares productive and using effectively the waters of Santa River. Since then, large agro-concerns in Chavimochic could export their products to the international market and thanks to them the brand Peru for products like asparagus and avocado is now internationally well known. However, the way this project has been implemented is characterised by an income generating point of view instead of a life-supporting view.

The improvement of irrigation in this area shows nowadays several economic, social and environmental consequences. An extensive investigation work has been done through field work and interviews for demonstrating basically the soil salinity risk, ground water pollution, social stress through extension of urban centres and social conflicts for water resources. Moreover, the effects are not limited to the present time but for the near future these are programmed as the agro-concerns will depend on melt waters of the Andes, social conflicts will rise due to the lack of basic management policies, soil degradation will become a problem because of lack of water management knowledge.

**Keywords:** Institutional change, irrigation projects management, land use