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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

## Investigating Relationship Between Farmers’ Water Conservation Behaviour and Social Capital

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### Abstract

There is a high risk of serious water shortages in Middle-East and North African countries. To decrease this threat water conservation strategies are gaining overall importance and one main focus is now on farmer’s behaviour. In this regard, Iran faces a serious and worsening water crisis, and water conservation by its farmers is rightly seen as crucial to any resolution. Despite increasing acknowledgement that social capital is an important determinant of natural resource management, empirical evidence regarding the direction and strength of these linkages in the developing world is limited and inconclusive. Furthermore In order to improve the effectiveness of the sustainable management of natural resources it is essential to explore their social implications. The aim of this article is investigate relationships between social capital and farmers’ water management behaviour in western Iran. To measure social capital, we adopt a structural/cognitive distinction from previous study, whereby structural social capital is measured by organisational membership and cognitive social capital is measured by a composite index of trust, reciprocity, and mutual help. A face-to-face survey of farmers ( $n = 360$ ) was undertaken in western Iran. The reliability and validity of the instruments were examined and approved. IAs a first step we used a confirmatory factor analysis to aggregated indicators of social capital. In a second step we used a multiple linear regression to investigate different aspects of social capital on farmers’ water conservation behaviour. It is evident that significant connections exist between aspects of social capital and behaviour of farmers towards water conservation.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, Iran, social capital, water conservation