Tropentag, September 18-21, 2016, Vienna, Austria

"Solidarity in a competing world — fair use of resources"

Water Conservation Program and Practice in Irrigated Agriculture in Iran: A Case Study of Lake Urmia Basin

Asna Ashari Farah

Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB), Institute of Development Research and Development Policy , Germany

Abstract

Human and environmental demand for water resources across Iran are increasing while the water shortage in this semi-arid country is a serious problem. As agriculture is the main water user of all sectors (agriculture, industry and municipal supply), expanding efficient irrigation systems is a challenge for policy makers in Iran. Some parts of water shortage in traditional irrigation systems are due to lack of water conservation methods. The importance of farmers' roles as the main stakeholders in managing water resources cannot be exaggerated. This increases the pressure on farmers to use water as efficiently as possible.

This is a descriptive study to review the facts of water conservation application in Iran relying on a survey in Lake Urmia basin; one of the largest agricultural regions within the country. The survey was conducted in February to April 2013 in East Azerbaijan. Farmers were questioned about their water conservation practices and problems to enlighten the capacity for enhancing water and environmental sustainability programs in the region. About 20 percent of applied water conservation methods exist of proper watering techniques and irrigation system improvements. More than 50 % of the farmers stated that the main reason for not applying water conservation methods is the lack of financial means which put this problem on top of the list. Other reasons for sticking to traditional inefficient irrigation systems include a lack of knowledge and a lack of motivation. Small land size which makes using the techniques and tools costly is also a distinctive to conserve water.

Keywords: Agriculture, irrigation, sustainability, water conservation

Contact Address: Asna Ashari Farah, Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB), Institute of Development Research and Development Policy , Universitätsstr. 150 Gb 1 / 154, 44801 Bochum, Germany, e-mail: farah.asnaashari@rub.de