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## Climate Change' Beliefs and Risk Perception: A Gender Perspective from Iran

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### Abstract

Climate change' belief and risk perception are the preconditions for farmers' adaptation response. Therefore, identify the perceptual and cognitive processes of farmers is very important to encourage adaptation to climate change. There is an assumption that men and women have different perceptions and consequently adaptive behaviours. However, there is so far little literature that addresses the gender differences in beliefs and risk perceptions of climate change in rural areas particularly south west of Asia. This study uses a qualitative approach to compare belief in climate change and perceived risk among men and women farmers. The research population consisted of farmers in Baghmalek county of Khuzestan in southwestern Iran. Semi-structured interviews were made with 18 men and 15 women farmers who were purposefully selected. The results showed farmers all acknowledged that climate change had occurred in their area. Both men and women believed reduced rainfall (20 respondents) and increased temperature (18 respondents) as the main signs of climate change. Men cite increased pests and plant diseases, increased drought, and drying up river water as other signs of climate change. While women consider the loss of vegetation in the region and the drying up of groundwater (wells, aqueducts, springs) as signs of climate change. In addition, climate change risk perception has varied by gender. Women perceived social problems such as loss of agricultural jobs (8 respondents), migration (6 respondents), and health (4 respondents), however, men mainly refer to livelihood and economic risks such as reduced access to healthy food (10 respondents), reduced agricultural yields (7 respondents) and the increase of diseases (6 respondents). It seems, most men and women perception the occurrence and risks of climate change. Although there are similarities in the perceptions of the two groups, female farmers were mostly afraid of unemployment and the loss of agriculture, while men were concerned about the probability of declining incomes. These results can be used as a basis for developing appropriate interventions to adapt to climate change in the agriculture sector.

**Keywords:** Adaptation, belief, climate change, qualitative method, risk perception, rural women

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