

WATER MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE IN SYRIA

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ABSTRACT

Irrigated agriculture has increased steadily in Syria over the last decades, almost doubling since 1985. This mounting pace has responded to the nation's food security policy objectives to satisfy the food production needs of an increasing population that features one of the largest growth rates in the world, namely 3,50 percent in 1985 and still 3,39 percent in 2007. Total expenditures for irrigated agriculture accounted for almost 70 percent of all expenditures in agriculture. Sustainable irrigation water policies aimed at increasing the efficiency of water use in agriculture and at conserving water resources by reducing future consumption.

The Euphrates River is 2.800 km long and its middle traverses a wide floodplain in Syria, where it is used extensively for irrigation, and the Euphrates Dam is 230 ft (70 m) high. The total estimated water use volume is about 15 billion m³. The Euphrates and Orontes basins account for about 50% and 20% of the water use respectively.

About 701.634 ha has been irrigated by ground water in the year 1997. This area represents 60% of the total irrigated land in Syria It has been gradually increased from 30% during 1970 to 44% in 1980 and 49% in 1990.

The Government projects extended on 349.820 hectare area, which includes large, medium and small scale farms. The small scale government project is under 2000 hectare, but large scale project over 20.000 hectare areas. The Syrian Government wants to ensure the food supply for sharply increasing population based on established governmental agricultural projects, as state-owned farms.

Water balance for Syria indicates that most of the basins are in deficit. This will be exacerbated further especially in basins encompassing large urban areas and if the country's population continues to grow at its current rate (about 3%) and water use efficiency is not increased effectively.