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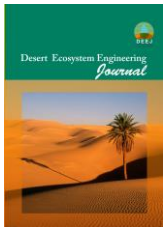

Investigating the Economic Status of Northern Khorramabad Basin

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Extended Abstract

Introduction: Playing a crucial role in the economic and social growth of societies, agricultural development may help create numerous job opportunities and contribute significantly to non-oil exports. However, achieving this potential requires effective resource management and the sustainable use of watersheds. In other words, it could be argued that the way resources are owned and utilized within watersheds greatly influences sustainable agricultural development. In this regard, this study set out to investigate the economic status of the northern Khorramabad basin in terms of both the current potentials and limitations existing in the basin. Primarily characterized by peasant farming and smallholder agriculture, the area faces several challenges, including soil erosion, sedimentation, flooding, droughts, decreasing revenues, and population migration.

Material and methods: The primary objective of this study was to assess the economic status and living standards of the residents living near the basin on the one hand and the performance of various agricultural and livestock sectors on the other hand. To this end, several key issues were examined, including the size of agricultural and horticultural land, the production and yield of crops and horticultural products, employment in such sectors, livestock status, and the revenues earned from these activities. The required data for the study were collected through field visits, interviews with villagers, administration of a questionnaire, and consultations with local experts, officials of agricultural and health organizations, and reports published in previous years.

Results: The findings of the study indicated that the northern Khorramabad enjoyed limited diversity in terms of job opportunities. In this regard, it was found that the primary economic activities in the area consisted of agriculture, husbandry, and, in some cases, horticulture due to the basin's relatively limited potential for agricultural and husbandry activities. Accordinggly, key limiting factors included improper exploitation methods, inadequate skills and knowledge among operators, and an aging labor force. These factors have not only reduced agricultural productivity but also impeded the development of entrepreneurship within the region. Moreover, the study found that the residents' revenues predominantly depended on agricultural activities, with horticultural products such as walnut contributing significantly to the overall revenues earned from the basin. Economic assessments suggest that farming cows, calves, goats and young goats is more cost-effective than farming sheep and lamb. Moreover, the cost of farming sheep and lamb is estimated to be about 11 percent higher than that of other livestock, indicating relative inefficiency in this regard.

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In addition to agriculture and husbandry, the northern Khorramabad basin possesses other potentials that could contribute to the region's development, including tourism and recreational capacities. In other words, the region has a significant capacity to attract both domestic and international tourists due to its unique landscapes and tourism attractions. However, lack of well-designed plans and proper management in terms of tourism has prevented the proper exploitation of such a great potential. Therefore, not only has the tourism sector failed to provide substantial job opportunities and revenues, but the lack of planning has also led to the degradation of natural resources of the region.

Discussion and conclusion: The analysis of the current status of the basin indicates that for sustainable development of agriculture and husbandry within the basin, it is essential to focus on structural changes and create new capacities. Improving the knowledge and skills of farmers, employing scientific methods for managing water and soil resources, and promoting innovative agricultural technologies can effectively boost productivity in this regard. Additionally, developing tourism activities by establishing adequate infrastructure and implementing organized programs can provide a new source of income for the local residents. Overall, this study showed that despite significant limitations, the Northern Khorramabad basin enjoys great capacities that can raise the region's economic and social status and improve the sustainability of natural resources if managed properly and supported by appropriate development policies. Furthermore, the findings of the study stressed the significance of local community participation in, careful planning for, and a holistic approach to basin development, presenting a model that can be applied to other similar regions.

Keywords: Production and Yield, Basin Potential, Livestock, Agriculture, Socio-economic Issues.