

Economic Map of New Syria

Agriculture

Briefing



The Rehabilitation of the Agricultural Sector

Abstract

This is just a summary of the complete study. It covers an overview of the agriculture in Syria and the recommendation for three-phase planes, immediate, medium and long terms.

Overview

- **Geographical and Environmental Characteristics**

Syria occupies a prime location on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea; The Syrian territory is divided according to its geographical nature from the West to the East to: coastal region, mountainous area, the interior, and then the Badia (Desert) region. This diverse spread of land has caused a variation in rainfall throughout the country where it starts with excess of 600 mm in the coastal area and the mountains and decreases all the way to up to 100 mm towards the east. As a result, the crops vary from region to another based on these rainfalls.

- **Natural Resources**

Agricultural Land:

Syria has an area of 18.51 million hectares, of which 33% is suitable for agriculture, 46% is grasslands, and 3% of forest; whereas the rest is not suitable for agriculture. The total area arable land as of 2010 was 6.045 million hectares, of which only 5.7 million hectares were invested. In general agriculture in Syria have been affected by the decrease of rainfalls, increasing urbanization of arable lands, the salinization of irrigated land (Euphrates region), and desertification in the desert and the marginal areas.

Water Resources:

The estimated net annual water resources available for investment from fixed sources are 14 billion m³. The agricultural sector consumes 90% of these resources. The water resources, despite of being inadequate, suffers from inefficiency of use, absence of rationalization and sustainability as standard methods of irrigation

are still predominant.

Desert and Grasslands:

The area of meadows and pastures is 8.212 million hectares dominated by sheep farming, has been in constant retreat due to decrease of rainfall, overgrazing, vulnerability to erosion, and the deterioration of plants edible by sheep.

- **Investment of agricultural resources**

In 2010, the agricultural resources (land and water) were invested to produce agricultural and food products as the following:

- *Wheat*: 745 thousand hectares of irrigated crops, and 854 thousand hectares of rainfed crops.
- *Barley*: 1465 thousand hectares of rainfed crops.
- *Legumes*: 196 hectares of rainfed crops.
- *Cotton*: 172 thousand hectares of irrigated crops.
- *Corn*: 37 thousand hectares of irrigated crops.
- *Vegetables*: 1000 hectares of both irrigated and rainfed crops.
- *Fruit Trees*: 992 thousand hectares both irrigated and rainfed.

- **Action plans required for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the agricultural sector.**

1. Short-Term Plan (Immediate Phase)

This plan spans over the period of six months or one growing season and is based on the resumption of growing the major strategic crops, both winter and summer crops, in addition to vegetables and fruit trees. It also continues to provide the care and feeding for livestock and poultry at same level of 2010, at a total cost of \$ 5723 million.

If the plan is to be limited to only providing supplies of seed production, fertilizer, fuel and pest control materials as well as and

feed and veterinary medicines, the cost will go down to \$2877 million as the following:

- \$ 714 million for winter crops (\$601 million for wheat)
- \$267 million for summer crops (\$216 million for cotton)
- \$344 million for summer vegetables (\$165 million for potato)
- \$683 million for fruit trees (\$377 million for olive trees)
- \$869 million for livestock production

This plan is to be funded by the Group of Friends of the Syrian People.

2. Medium-Term Plan

This plan spans over two years and it targets the following:

- **Work on the completion of a new administrative restructure of the Ministry of Agriculture**

The need to harmonize the modern Syria with the global economic trend requires:

- I. Establishing a strong and decisive administration in the Ministry of Agriculture for strategic planning and policy writing
- II. Finding effective points of convergence within the Ministry of Agriculture between farmers, planners, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations
- III. Establishment of a marketing information system that collects and publishes market data on weekly or daily basis
- IV. It also requires sustainable development and protection of natural resources, climate change, and the transition to work in difficult environments, which can be achieved through:
 - a. A qualified and skilled committee within the ministry to manage resources and do environmental planning.
 - b. Strengthening the capacity to measure indicators and benefits for the agricultural and service projects with environmental impact, and recruiting qualified personnel.

- c. Restructuring or even re-assessing the institutions of agricultural research and extension, rehabilitation and agricultural training.
- d. Strengthening the role of agricultural research in the Ministry of Agriculture and supplying it with the necessary scientific disciplines.
- e. Providing a stimulating work environment and help for professional researchers in the Ministry of Agriculture.
- f. The transition from traditional methods to the use of modern technologies in the development of plant and animal breeds.
- g. Strengthening the role of agricultural coaching and guidance through the development of technical skills of agricultural coaching personnel.
- h. Supporting the agricultural coaching and guidance units with equipments and technologies necessary to improve its performance.

– **Rural development:**

This plan will work to establish means to improve the living conditions of 47% of the population through:

- I. The establishment of an institutional entity for rural development.
- II. Development of technological and academic frameworks with high configuration in the field of rural development.
- III. Providing local leadership capable of playing leading roles in the development process.
- IV. Reviving the role of civil society organizations and associations that are active in the rural field.
- V. Development and completion of targeted development programs aimed at the rural population and all axes of productivity.
- VI. Development of effective participation in the making and implementation of development decisions, including the development of the local community.

– **The focus on the social dimension of agricultural development:**

This plan will take on providing technical and financial support for small farmers, developing their abilities, and diversifying their agricultural activities in order to raise the standard of living of rural families by establishing income-generating projects similar to the projects listed below:

1. \$1880 thousand for project “Backyard Poultry” in rural areas.
2. \$409 thousand to introduce “Turkey Project” to rural homes.
3. \$2400 thousand for the project of raising fish and ducks in wells, tanks in Hasakah province.
4. \$521 thousand for the project of vetch cultivation under the olive trees.
5. \$55 thousand dollars for the training courses project to improve the feed value of crop residues.

This plan proposes securing the funding from the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development, and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development.

3. Long-Term Plan

This plan spans over 5 years and aims at the maintenance and development of natural resources and the raise the efficiency of use. It consists of several major projects aimed at maintaining, sustaining and developing the basic resources (water, land) as well as improving productivity.

The estimated cost of these projects is \$359,888,000; some of these projects are:

1. \$340,500,000: The cost to divert 500,000 hectares to be irrigated with modern irrigation methods. This project is proposed to be funded by the Group of Friends of the Syrian People.
2. \$1,400,000: The cost to improve water harvesting projects in the Southern region. This project is proposed to be funded by FAO and ACSAD
3. \$3,000,000: The cost for the project on integrated management

of watersheds in the coastal region. This project is proposed to be funded by The Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development.

4. \$3,000,000: The cost of a project to improve the productivity of irrigated land in the Euphrates basin. This project is proposed to be funded by the Islamic funds.
5. \$10,000,000: The cost of the Integrated Development Project in the Syrian desert in the eastern provinces. This project is proposed to be funded by Arab funds.
6. \$4,213,000: The cost of the project of the integrated management of the desert in Homs. This project is proposed to be funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development.
7. \$875,000: The cost of the Awassi sheep breeding project in the marginal area adjacent to the desert. This project is proposed to be funded by the ACSAD.

- **Investment opportunities available for the business community to develop the sector**

- Collecting and marketing of milk and manufactured dairy products especially in Lattakia, Deir ez-Zor, and Al-Ghab valley.
- Manufacturing of concentrated and ready feed for cows, sheep and poultry, particularly in Damascus, Hama and Hasakah.
- Sorting and packaging of fruits and vegetables with cooling storages, particularly in Damascus, Homs and Latakia.
- Manufacturing of nitrogenous fertilizers and urea.
- Manufacturing the production machineries and other means of agricultural production.
- Manufacturing the requirements of modern irrigation methods.