

LAND AND WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN ALBANIA

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After being isolated for half a century, Albania is now going towards a market economy, continuing the process of democracy and implementing the economic reform in all the sectors of the national economy.

Considering the transitional period as the most important step for a quick change from a planned and centralized economy to the market economy, the Albanian government has worked out the strategies and policies for this step, pursuing the rapid re-vitalisation of food industry as ultimate goal.

The economic reform in Albania is characterized by results which involve a marked growth of macro-economic indicators and a positive trend for an accelerated transformation of rural areas. The reform was envisaged giving to agriculture a priority and strategic role for the national economy. A key role in the success of the reform was played by the rapid privatisation of agricultural lands followed by the suppression of agricultural cooperatives and the ending of State farms.

The support of private farmers, who are the basic structure of agricultural production, together with innovation and agricultural machinery, made possible the revival of agricultural production and allowed agriculture to avoid the collapse it had experienced before the reform.

Agriculture has presently shown a significant growth, as compared with the other economic sectors, providing 50% of the GDP.

The organisation and restructuring of agriculture have dictated the enforcement of a legislation on land, agricultural production, veterinary service and zootechnics, plants, environment, forest and fishing protection.

I take the opportunity to stress that the aid given to the Albanian agriculture by the EEC, the World Bank, the USAID, the IMF, the IFAD and several countries like Italy, Germany, Turkey and France has been crucial to go through the transitional period painlessly. For this we express our thanks and our gratitude to everybody. Albania is rich of natural resources and has a great potential to get the rank of important food agricultural producer for domestic consumption and export. Because of its Mediterranean climate

and its plenty of water resources and the possibility to meet crop water requirements being a limiting factor of production, irrigation policies have a priority in the agricultural Albanian strategy. The irrigation potential accounts for 420 thousand hectares, equal to 60% of cultivable areas.

Irrigation programmes have been studied together with those of reclamation and development of different areas, within the framework of the national economy development.

The creation of the private agricultural economy requires new strategies and irrigation techniques.

Thanks to the World Bank programmes, efforts will be made to rehabilitate the existing irrigation network, to improve the domestic one and to introduce and use modern irrigation techniques for a more efficient and economic use of water resources in order to increase the agricultural production.

On a surface of more than 1 million hectares, forests represent an important resource of the country. The studies conducted by our experts in cooperation with the World Bank experts have already identified the strategy of forest development and use in Albania. The development of such a strategy is aimed at promoting the development of such sector, through the implementation of infrastructures, the forestation of unproductive lands and the expansion of protected areas for flora and fauna preservation.

Being Albania a Mediterranean country, it owns resources for fishing and aquaculture. In cooperation with FAO and the neighbouring countries like Italy, it is setting out a modern legislation for the management, development and rational and scientific use of these resources.

The Albanian agriculture needs projects and achievements for the improvement of irrigation, the development of viticulture in the poor rural areas, the production of high yielding seeds, the optimal use of all the resources of the cultivable area.

The Albanian agriculture needs financing and credits at favourable conditions for the support of private farmers and food industry, extension service, the specialization of technicians and training of farmers, as well as the assistance of applied research institutions of the Mediterranean region which have a great experience in these fields.

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