

## FOCUS

# LAND AND WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN SYRIA

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The comprehensive concept of the environment has arisen through Stockholm Conference in 1972 in which it was referred to as more than a set of natural components «soil, water, air.....» but to include also the net socio-natural resources available in time and space to fulfil the human needs and ambitions. The natural resources include the available land and water resources, whereas, the social environment represents the passages human communities had adopted to modify nature and sometimes through the unguided use of these resources that led to the appearance of desertification phenomenon, deterioration of productivity and the residual effects of agrochemicals.

Water available on the earth is not evenly distributed, the amount of rainfall in some parts of the world and especially in the Arabic region is scarce and below the requirements this compels humans to interfere to enhance availability by several measures such as constructing dams and reservoirs, harvesting water, pumping underground water and improving water management, hence, adopting every practice to minimize the need for water.

Desertification phenomenon became an obsession to several countries in the Middle East and North Africa. A phenomenon that drastically and equally affected socio-economic and food security plans. As a consequence, the schedule of this Conference we share in today tackles one of the most standing problems. Research and studies to be given by scientists and experts of the scientific and research institutes in the Mediterranean States will focus on subjects such as the identification of desertification and deterioration of the agricultural soils, the extent of negative effects of deforestation and eradication of plant cover on the acceleration of erosion processes, practices adopted for water harvesting and storage, the balanced and integrated use of soils, ways of sustaining land use and the role of agricultural extension and training in up-

grading the skills and attitudes of rural inhabitants for the conservation of natural resources in general and soil and water in particular as the two major components of agricultural production. Such utmost importance of these subjects, will result in highly important decisions and recommendations, will provide for the means in the region and several countries in the world to achieve proper management practices that secure the sustainment of land and water resources and to delineate programs for proper water usage, its collection and conservation in the most economic and sound scientific ways.

Syria had allotted the quest of agricultural development the highest attention giving it the first priority in the country socio-economic policy. Our investment plans were directed toward the benefit of producers. In addition, we worked for the yield increase through strengthening research, modernizing and providing inputs for the conservation of natural resources.

The government's uninterrupted efforts being guided and directed by President Hafez El Assad aimed at realizing agricultural development through land reclamation of saline soils, planting fruit trees in mountainous areas, execution of soil and water conservation projects, development of animal wealth through artificial insemination, health care and breeding projects. Through the execution of these projects the target of self-sufficiency could be realized with surplus for exportation of most plant and animal products. Our production had increased for wheat from 624,000 tons to 3,626,000 tons, for cotton 384,000 tons to 639,000 tons, for sugar beet from 228,000 tons to 1,237,000 tons, for maize from 8,000 tons to 200,000 tons, for apples from 17,500 tons to 250,000 tons, for citrus from 4,300 tons to 454,000 tons within the period 1970-1993. During the same period of time, the number of cattle had increased from 528,000 heads to 765,000 heads, the number of sheep had increased from 6 millions to 15 millions and poultry had increased from 3.7 millions to 17 millions coupled with remarkable increase in productivity. ●

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