

Nature and Agriculture in Syria

Part 1 : Varied Climates of Syria

Syria is located in northern part of the Middle East, in latitude between 32° and 37° north and longitude between 35° and 42° east. The area covers about 1,850,000k m², almost half of Japan, but their topography and climate are full of variety. The Mediterranean coast area has plain coast of 180km long and 20-30km wide, and mountains parallel to the coast. The weather is temperate and cultivation of citrus fruits and greenhouse vegetables are popular. The Mediterranean mountain area consists of steep mountains stretching from south to north. Some of the mountains such as Jabal Sheikh in south west of Damascus reaches up to 2,800m above the sea level. It snows in winter and annual precipitation is more than 1,000mm. Apples are produced on the mountains. In inland plain area, the "Fertile Crescent" spreads from east side of the mountains along the border with Turkey. Rainfall in winter, high temperature and dry weather in summer make this area an important grain producing zone. The desert called "Badia" spreads in south-east, and occupies more than 40% of the country.

Agriculture is one of the main industry in Syria. Agricultural products are very important not only for domestic consumption but also for export. The basic problems of Syrian agriculture are unstable production due to the cultivation practice solely depending on rainfall, and lack of infrastructure such as irrigation facilities. Moreover, as vast area of the country is semi-arid land, conservation of natural environment has to be put into serious consideration when development projects are planned. So-called "sustainable agriculture" should be more focused in order to solve problems such as soil erosion, salt accumulation and desertification, which are major common issues in arid and semi-arid areas.

In this series, we would like to divide Syria into four areas according to the climatic features and introduce cultivation practices of each area, environmental problems and their trials which seem to be effective for sustainable agriculture.

