

Nature and Agriculture in Syria (6)

Part 6: Future Challenges

In the last five parts in this series we have chiefly examined agricultural systems unique to each region of Syria and the environmental issues they face. In this part, we have compiled a chart of current environmental issues and possible counter measures, in order to list future tasks that need to be undertaken in order to utilize Syria's natural resources sustainably.

Items	Current Environmental Problems	Possible Measures
Water Quality Conservation	Contamination of river and underground water due to agricultural chemicals, household and industrial effluent. Impact of contaminated water on agriculture and household water supply.	Implementation at the national level of measures to counter water contamination. Employment of simple household effluent treatment systems at the regional and residential level. Water quality improvement and improvement of waterside environments by promoting water access improvement projects.
Soil Conservation	Soil erosion and degradation on the steep slopes of coastal areas. Wind erosion and shifting sand problems in the inland desert areas. Soil degradation due to continuous exploitative agriculture.	Transmission of traditional stone walling techniques as a means of preventing erosion, and water harvesting. Promotion of afforestation activities for erosion control, rain water cultivation, and sand fixation. Transformation of crop rotation systems.
Salt Accumulation	Intrusion of sea water into underground water supplies due to over pumping. Inappropriate water management. Seepage from irrigation channels. Poor drainage. Overuse of chemical fertilizers.	Thorough implementation of appropriate water management systems by organizations such as water management co-operatives. Implementation of appropriate irrigation and water seepage measures in accordance with amounts of water consumption for different crops. Maintenance of drainage channels.
Women's Issues	Physical burdens on women such as water fetching, pest control and agricultural labour. Lack of understanding on the part of men regarding activities to improve living conditions. Stagnated agricultural income.	Reduction of women's burdens by easy measures such as the introduction of simple labour saving devices. Development of local produce based on detailed market surveys. Activation of handicraft and food processing industries.
Badia	Desertification caused by inappropriate land use (deterioration of land due to "gamble agriculture", deterioration of natural vegetation due to expansion of land off limits to grazing.)	Experiments on improvement of water harvesting techniques and vegetation rehabilitation. Implementation of practical activities in ways that co-exist with the nomadic lifestyle.

In Syria, tourism development based on historical heritage will continue to be a very important industry. In the future, it will be an important task for tourism development and the recreational activities of residents, to maintain waterside environments, promote water quality improvement, and improve people's access to water along the river banks. Water quality improvement activities at the local level, such as household effluent treatment using charcoal, are desirable. Also, in order to realize the transmission of traditional stone walling techniques, the promotion of appropriate water management on the regional level and the reduction of women's labour, activities at the local residential level will play an important role. Furthermore, it is impossible to discount nomadic people's lifestyles when considering effective use of Badia. In this way, to sustainably use natural resources in Syria, it is necessary to promote activities on a regional basis and with the participation of local people. It is our strong hope that Japanese assistance will embrace these ways of thinking and will involve co-operation in a way that will truly contribute to the improvement of people's lives.



Water pollution in rivers has become a major issue all over Syria



Daily water fetching is almost entirely carried out by women