

## Agriculture and farmers in Kurdish region <Part 1>

### Kurdish agriculture

As introduced in AAINews volume 70, the three prefectures (Erbil, Suleimania and Dohuk) in the Kurdish region in north Iraq have autonomous status and have seen their own unique development. In the past, the Kurdish people went through harsh periods in Iraq and in neighboring countries. However, after the former Iraq regime collapsed, although it is not perfect, the Kurdish region is developing rapidly within stable political situation and public order as well as with foreign investments. In these circumstances, the Kurdistan Regional Government has been actively supporting the farming population both financially and technically with the aim of agricultural development, which is the main regional industry.

The Kurdish region's topography is characterized by plains with an altitude of less than 300m in the Erbil prefecture and the south western part of the Suleimania prefecture. In the south of Dohuk and from the central part of Erbil to the central part of Suleimania, the scenery is dominated by gentle hills. In the border areas with Iran and Turkey, the mountain ranges rise over 3,000m and their southern slopes are steep. The precipitation in the Kurdish region varies immensely, ranging from 400mm per year in the arid south to 1,000 mm in the mountainous areas in the north. Iraq in general has sufficient precipitation and a varied topography with many different types of soil. Compared to southern Iraq, the northern areas, including the Kurdish region, enjoy relatively fertile soil. In the Kurdish region, from the southern plain to the gentle hills, rain-fed grain cultivation (mainly wheat) is predominant. In the areas with abundant water, vegetable cultivation using underground water irrigation is common. In the sloping areas, fruit cultivation is widespread. In this way, various forms of farming are practiced, making the most of the varied climate and topographical conditions. In addition, livestock farming by grazing is popular and it is a major source of cash

income for farmers.

In this kind of environment, agriculture has high potential to grow in the Kurdish region. It is therefore one of the most important industries for the re-construction of Iraq. At the



Kurdistan autonomous region in Iraq

same time, agriculture can act as an important link between the Iraq central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to continue their friendly relationship. The Kurdish region used to be the bread basket of Iraq, however due to the long years of fighting and exodus of farmers and technocrats, the production has not reached the past high levels. However, the Kurdistan Regional Government is seeing reconstruction of the agricultural industry as a pillar for the new autonomous region, and is directing various forms of support into the agricultural field.

In this series, we will introduce the current situations and issues surrounding agriculture in the Kurdish region, dealing separately with the fields of grain production, vegetable cultivation and fruit cultivation. We will introduce the voices of farmers and local technicians which we gathered through local interviews. Moreover, by introducing the cultivation processes, we would like to touch upon the Kurdish people's spirit and their living environment.



Agricultural land around Erbil (taken from the air)



Hilly agricultural lands in the Kurdish areas