

## Agriculture and farmers in Kurdish region <Part 6>

### Future stability and promotion of agriculture in the Kurdish regions

Through this series we introduced the natural environment of the Kurdish regions in Iraq, as well as agricultural practices and situations surrounding agriculture, and the Kurdish farmers' character.

Presently, the Kurdish regions in Iraq are granted autonomous status, and they have been exploring their own development. Agriculture is a major pillar in their effort. On the other hand, many Kurdish people fled the war to other countries. It is not only us who is feeling that the exodus of technocrats has become a major barrier for agricultural development in the country. To date, many Kurdish people we met in the Gulf Region and other countries are contributing to the host countries' development working as foreign technicians. At the same time, this is causing a dilemma that in the Kurdish regions, the lack of technicians is hampering regional development.

As mentioned in this series, the Kurdish region has a high potential for agricultural development. However, the shortage of qualified technicians is a major limiting factor for development of the sector. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has been making the effort to increase productivity and quality of agriculture through research at agricultural experiment stations and through extension activities. However, these actions have not yielded sufficient results. One reason for this is the insufficient cooperation with and support for farmers in a range of sectors such as production, shipping, processing and sales. In particular, most vegetable and fruit products are inferior to those produced in neighboring regions. Markets and necessary facilities are not sufficiently secured. In addition, the transportation system is poor, causing deterioration of product quality before it reaches consumers. In future, measures against diseases and pests in continuous vegetable cultivation in greenhouses are expected to become a major challenge.

Currently, JICA is implementing the Project on Horticulture Technology Improvement and Extension in KRG as part of its support for the Kurdish regions, dispatching experts and organizing training courses. The technician who supported surveys which an AAI staff was involved in, is also working in the project implementation. This type of support aiming to develop human resources is effective for nurturing capable technicians like him. Moreover, as the Kurdish people have a very friendly attitude towards Japan, support from Japan can result in a large impact. It is therefore considered that this type of support is clearly worth continuing as part of Japan's support for promoting Iraq's agriculture.

Persecution of the Kurdish people and in-fighting among the Kurds cannot be said to have fully ended. At present, the situation surrounding autonomous governance is also complicated by the influence of the old powers. In Erbil and Duhok, the old Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) remains very influential. The Kurdistan Worker's Party (KPP) is strong in Sulaymaniyah (as of 2010). We strongly hope that Iraq's Kurdish region will achieve development as a bread basket of Iraq, and with a peaceful and good environment to live in, by swiftly resolving some of the unstable elements in its politics and society.

We are fully aware that it is more easily said than done. However, we feel very fortunate and fulfilled to have been part of the support activities in the Kurdish region, which is still a very far away "country" for most of us. We hope that the relationship between the Kurdish region and Japan, and the relationship between Japan and Iraq will deepen in years to come. We are convinced that our support for the agricultural sector in Iraq is playing a role in international contribution and cooperation, and for deepening the friendship between Iraq and Japan, through our day-to-day and face-to-face interaction between the Japanese experts and counterparts working jointly on the ground on farms.



Branches drooping with the weight of apricot fruits



Kurdish friends