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# **WOMEN, AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION IN TURKEY AND GEWAMED PROJECT**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Irrigation has a vital role in increasing and stabilizing agricultural production in Turkey due to erratic character of rainfall which might prevail during the growing season in most parts of the country. Economically viable irrigation is possible for 8.5 million hectares. Of the total irrigable area 55% is currently under irrigation.

The institutional framework for Government and other public institutions responsible for irrigation and drainage are The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA), General Directorate of Rural Services (GDRS), State Hydraulic Works (DSI) and The General Directorate of Agricultural Reform (GDAR).

Government-supported irrigation has contributed substantially to agricultural growth. State Hydraulic Works (DSI) will continue to plan and implement huge irrigation projects such as Southeastern Anatolian Project. A limited area is also expected to be developed for irrigation by the General Directorate of Rural Services (GDRS) and the farmers themselves.

Recently, in the past decade, most of the irrigation schemes in operation have been transferred to Water Users Associations (WUA) and cooperatives in order to run them more efficiently and recover costs. There is no legal problem in transferring the irrigation systems owned by DSI to Governmental organizations (municipal authorities) and non governmental organizations (cooperatives or WUAs). This is among the good opportunities for integrating the gender dimensions into water resources management in general and in irrigated agriculture in particular.

## **WOMEN'S SITUATION IN TURKEY**

Turkey as a developing country is clutched between the western and traditional values and norms. When this dilemma is considered, it is clear that the role and development of Turkish women is under many influences. The foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923 has definitely accelerated the contribution of women to the national economy. The precautions and laws for the advancement of women in Turkish society have resulted in the potential gains in all sectors of the economy, be it industry, services or agriculture.

In 1926, Turkey was the first Islamic country to eliminate the Sharia (the law which continues to dominate the area of marriage and family life in most Muslim countries) by establishing its own Civil Code. Despite this decision, the position of women in Turkey varies over an extremely wide range: from highly educated and professional women in the major cities to a majority of women in the rural areas who are caught between two different worlds - one determined by culture and tradition that limits their activities to the family homestead, and the other shaped in large part by the continuing migration that brings them into the modern, productive sectors (World Bank, 1993).

Turkish women have gained great benefits thanks to education and legislation in the past decades. This advancement is clearly seen when one analyzes the percentage of employed population by their occupation (Table 1). For example, the percentage of women that have highly skilled jobs such as scientific, technical and professional jobs have increased from 2.5% to 4.8% between 1970-1990 and is still increasing.

Table 1. Percentage of employed population by occupation (%) over 12 years

Census year	1970		1975		1980		1985		1990	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Scientific, technical, professional, related workers	5.3	2.5	4.2	2.8	5.0	3.7	5.5	4.0	5.9	4.8
Administrative, Managerial workers	1.0	0.1	0.6	0.1	1.3	0.1	1.2	0.1	1.5	0.2
Clerical, related workers	3.5	1.3	3.6	2.1	3.8	3.1	3.8	3.2	4.2	3.9
Commercial, sales workers	5.7	0.3	4.8	0.5	6.5	0.5	7.1	0.8	8.1	1.1
Service workers	6.6	0.8	4.7	0.9	7.2	1.0	7.8	1.2	8.7	1.6
Agricultural, animal husbandry, forestry workers, fishermen, hunters	63.6	90.5	52.8	87.5	43.9	87.1	42.9	86.3	37.6	82.1
Non-agricultural production & related workers, transport equipment operators, labourers	14.2	4.6	29.3	6.0	32.3	4.5	31.7	4.5	34.0	6.4

In 1999, adult economic activity was lower for women than for men, with 31% of women economically active and 74% of men ([UN, Social Indicators](#)). There was a sharp decline in the female labour force in Turkey (70% in 1955 to 36% in 1998) (World Bank and [Genderstats, World Bank](#)); this is largely due to the special circumstances created by large-scale and increasing urban ward migration of the Turkish population. Women in the cities, many of whom are unskilled due to the low level of education, have limited employment opportunities, withdraw from the labour force and become housewives or work in the informal sector ([DGSPW](#)). According to the World Bank (1993), an estimated 1 million women work in the informal sector. Women are active mainly in the 20-24 age brackets. The percentage of women in the labour force then gradually declines as they bear children and assume full responsibility for child rearing.

In the decline of women's participation in the labour force, sectoral changes in the economy are also a significant factor, especially in the agricultural sector, which has been the traditional source of employment for Turkish women but has decreased significantly during the past 30 years. In the growing industrial and services sector, women are at a disadvantage in competition with men for jobs because they generally have lower, or different, academic achievement and labour force qualifications and are constrained by family, tradition and culture (World Bank, 1993).

Women have long had an important role in Turkish agriculture although their contribution has not been well recognized. Women's work in traditional rural activities is generally unpaid and is not considered work for it is, rather a life style (World Bank, 1993). Underestimation of women's work also derives from social values which assign the bread winning role to the men. Unpaid family workers are most common in the agricultural sector and almost all of the women working as unpaid family workers are employed in agriculture. Self employment is also higher in agriculture compared to other sectors.

Women constitute 26.3% of the total employment compared to 73.7% for men in all sectors of the economy. However, it also clearly presents that more women are employed in the agricultural sector than other sectors (44.3% versus 16.4%). These numbers reveals that 73% of the working women are engaged in the agricultural activities compared to 40% for men. This implies that supporting the activities directed towards rural women will improve their status in the family and the community. This also will lead to increases in the yield and quality of the products (Özçatalbas and Özkan, 2000).

Compared to other sectors, agriculture employs a higher proportion of illiterate workers. Recent data show that overall literacy rate is 87.5% with 95.3% for men and 79.9% for women. Although this situation is changing, on average three quarters of the illiterate males and almost all of the illiterate females in the labour force are engaged in agriculture. As the education level increases, both genders prefer to move to work in other sectors of the economy.

The degree of the women's participation in production and decision making are two most important parameters in measuring the involvement of women in agriculture. As the numbers have shown women are heavily involved in the production however they have little control or participation in the decision making process at the farm level although studies show that female farmers all around the world are equally efficient as men. Studies carried out in Izmir in western Turkey gives an idea about the involvement of women in agricultural activities (Atis, 2002). As it is seen in the table below (Table 2) women who are very active in most of the agricultural actions have not mentioned irrigation as one of their activities. This is explained by the fact that irrigation is regarded as heavy duty work; women are thought to lack the physical strength required by irrigation, therefore they are not considered to be able-bodied. The cultural values and traditions prevent women from doing such a heavy burden. Other reasons why rural women are not active in carrying out irrigation might be the fact that some irrigation work is carried out at night time; however women are expected to take care of the family and household works during that time.

Table 2. Average working time of surveyed women agricultural activities in their own farms (Atis, 2002 and Abay, *et al.*, 1999)

Crop Production	Average Time (days/year)	Animal Production	Average Time (days/year)	Average Time (hours/day)
Tobacco planting	29.19	Barn cleaning	564.14	1.55
Tobacco hoeing	18.50	Feeding	468.05	1.28
Tobacco harvest	53.61	Watering	274.30	0.75
Olive harvest	33.39	Milking	446.75	1.22
Vegetable harvest	20.90	Calving	144.70	0.40
Potato hoeing	12.13			
Potato harvest	9.88			
Cotton picking	20.89			

## ÇUKUROVA UNIVERSITY

Çukurova University occupies a foremost place among other Turkish universities with its 10 faculties, 1 state conservatory, 3 colleges, 9 vocational colleges, 3 institutes and 29 research and application centres. The university campus is located 10 kilometres away from the city centre, and is situated in a serene environment conducive to learning. This tranquil setting by the Seyhan Lake is complemented by a motivated staff, innovative labs and modern libraries. The university considers providing highly qualified graduates to Turkey as a top priority. The university, with its 1909 member teaching staff, offers courses to over 32,700 undergraduate, post graduate and doctorate students.

The faculty and students alike enjoy the Internet and CD-ROM Database in the Central Library which houses a wide variety of national and international publications. The university has well-equipped computer hardware, and the computer rooms are available for student use campus-wide. These computer rooms are also used for computer-assisted education and scientific research.

The university also offers its faculty and students a variety of recreational facilities including: an indoor sports center and swimming pool, a boathouse and a variety of sports grounds. Students can make the best of their leisure time in any of the 29 student clubs. The students of the university have the opportunity to do practical training abroad through AIESEC and similar organizations.

Within Çukurova University, The Faculty of Agriculture was founded in Adana in 1969 as an institution of Ankara University. In 1973, the faculty was taken over by Çukurova University. The faculty has 243 teaching staff. Besides the research centres of each department, the faculty has well-equipped laboratories and greenhouses to efficiently carry out application of courses and meet the needs of undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate students, research assistants and other researchers.

The Faculty of Agriculture consists of following departments:

- Agricultural Economics
- Agricultural Machinery
- Agricultural Structures and Irrigation
- Field Crops
- Food Engineering
- Horticulture
- Landscaping
- Plant Protection
- Soil
- Zootechnique

Based on contracts of cooperation, the faculty is in close relation with certain international agricultural education and research institutions as well as some Universities in Germany, France, The USA, Poland, Spain, The UK, Syria, and Italy. Based on this global relation, the exchange of both students and scientists is possible.

The students receive applied education on a 1000-hectare Research and Application Farm, where applied agricultural researches are conducted to contribute to solutions of basic research problems and other problems faced by crop producers and agricultural institutions.

Moreover, the faculty funnels some of its income from its Research and Application Farm for the coverage of some educational and research expenses.

Since 1987, the faculty has carried out intensive research and activities in accordance with the contract signed by Southeast Anatolian Development Project Board in order to make better use of the agricultural potential expected to emerge in the region due to irrigation.

The major research interests of Agricultural Structures and Irrigation and Agricultural Economics departments which will be involved in this project are:

- irrigation,
- agricultural structures,
- hydrology,
- environment and water pollution,
- soil salinity,
- soil erosion, and
- yield assessment with remote sensing.
- agricultural marketing
- agricultural economics
- rural sociology and women issues in agriculture

There are few institutions within the University as well as different centres partly supported by the university which carry out different works related to the gender issues:

- Women's studies centre of Çukurova University (KADAUM), having the following objectives:
  - ❖ To raise consciousness on women issues,
  - ❖ To organize education program for women,
  - ❖ To support projects related women,
  - ❖ To establish cooperation between other women's centres and institutions.
- International Federation of University Women, which major tasks are:
  - ❖ Empowerment of women in the society,
  - ❖ Integration of women to the economy,
  - ❖ Contemporary education of women,
  - ❖ Help women represent themselves in every stage,

- ❖ Encourage women to take place in decision making mechanism.
- Agricultural products education centre for rural women:
  - ❖ Purpose: help find jobs for unemployed rural and poor women around Adana by organizing job training courses.
  - ❖ Target population: 50 unemployed and poor women between the ages of 18-50.
  - ❖ Courses: greenhouses, ornamental crop production, animal breeding and horticulture.

## WORK PLAN FOR GEWAMED

- Organization of the work team (Gender-Water Team, National Central Focal Point, etc.): the project leader and his associate are from Cukurova University. Dr. Müge Kantar, a rural sociologist, is of utmost importance with her background in rural sociology and women issues in agriculture.
- Collection and review of the existing statistics –NGO's and government: there is not much available information on women issues in water management; however, any relevant information is still useful in developing the right strategy. Therefore, all NGOs and governmental agencies will be contacted with this purpose in mind. Any data and information should be exchanged between the related organizations. Also, their contribution as partners in the project will be highly appreciated.
- Analyze data (rural sociologists, ... etc): Dr. Müge Kantar and her associates will analyze the existing data and any other information that would be required will be collected by her staff.
- Organize national workshops; disseminate findings: the findings and results are meaningless unless they are available to other colleagues and policy-makers who work in the same areas or similar topics. Workshops at the national level will be held to disseminate knowledge and experiences.
- Preparation of a National Website: a national website with the help of professional website designers will be constructed to disseminate knowledge at the national level. Useful information and knowledge could be disseminated at the fastest and most efficient way only in this way.
- Enhance cooperation at national level of various institutions: both NGOs and governmental agencies are of utmost importance for this project to be successful and meaningful. This cooperation of the related partners should continue even after the project is officially over. Therefore, enhancement of the cooperation between the various institutions is one important prerequisite for the success of this mission. For example, Women Issues office of the Ministry of Agriculture is one key player in this monumental task.
- Training of policy-makers (i.e. Water Users Associations, ... etc.): since this issue is a relatively new concept it is still very vague for most of the policy makers. Training of the policy-makers, therefore, is very important for the accomplishment and sustainability of this plan. The policy-makers especially in the Water Users Associations are key players; therefore their contribution as well as their wholehearted commitment is vital in the advancement of women in the water management in Turkey.
- Develop information and communication skills: generating knowledge and putting that information to a useable form requires skills in communication and delivery.

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