CHAPTER 18

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF WATER USER’S ASSOCIATIONS IN UZBEKISTAN

Sandjar Djalalov
Center for Efficient Economic Policy, Uzbekistan

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan is situated in an arid zone and agriculture without irrigation is impossible. The role and importance of irrigated cultivation are illustrated by the following figures: irrigated land contributes 60% of the gross agricultural product; irrigated crop production contributes about 20% of the national income; the share of production assets from irrigated agriculture accounts for as much as 20% of the total assets of the national economy. Approximately 17% of electric energy is used for agriculture and irrigated agriculture provides employment for about 30% of the total working population of the Republic. Apart from favorable climatic conditions, there are sufficient labor resources due to low migration of the rural population (Djalalov, 2000).

In the near future the shortage of water for agriculture will increasingly constrain economic development of the country. The reasons for this are as follows: increasing shortage of water resources related to interstate distribution; reduction in irrigation capacity of Aral-basin rivers due to global changes in climate; human impact on the environment; quality of water; salinity of irrigated land and inefficient use of water and land resources.

The present system of water utilization in irrigated agriculture results in considerable losses in all stages of the water flow, from water intake, irrigation in the fields and overflow disposal. The loss rates vary according to the type of construction of water supply, overflow disposal system, irrigation
method and watering technique, as well as organizational, economic and other factors (Wegerich, 2000).

The attempts of introducing water charges and self-supporting attitudes in the Soviet period, without institutional changes at the farm level, privatization and liberalization of marketing system proved disastrous. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, under influence of the technical help rendered by international organizations a new institutional structure at a level of farms was created. This was called the Associations of Water User's (WUA) (Rosegrant et al., 1995).

The purpose of this chapter is to document the research on the external and internal factors of Association, influencing sustainable development of Water User's Association in Uzbekistan.

The research utilized a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods including interviews conducted in four regions of Uzbekistan. The Djizak, Syrdarya, Bukhara and Tashkent regions represent different natural, climatic and economic zones of rural Uzbekistan. The first survey was conducted in Jizzakh region in the year 2000. The survey design was a random sample of eight hundred sixty private arable farms. Jizzakh region is allocated in the south east of the country. The second survey was conducted in Syrdarya and Bukhara regions located in central and western parts of the country. The survey concentrated on results from field studies of different forms of ownership and organizational units in Uzbekistan agriculture. The survey was conducted in 2002 and covered 1200 farms. Investigation and analysis of on-farm management, finance and credit, water management and poverty in different types of farming has been conducted based on survey results. The third survey was conducted in the fall 2003 after adopting policy of Water Users Association development in the country. The Rural Rapid Appraisal (RRA) method was used in the farm survey conducted in the Tashkent region. Informal interviews and discussions were conducted with the farmers; employees WUA and workers of state water agencies. Special attention was given to the following questions: the basic motives that induced the farmers to join WUA, desire to pay for water, participation of the farmers in a management and activity of WUA, decision of disputed situations and factors limiting activity of WUA.