

SADB



Syrian Agricultural Database 2006

A Story of Statistics

Searching for detailed agricultural statistics in most countries of the world is a process that would normally involve a ladder and keen eye. Kept to the confines of statistical repositories and bureaus in the form of enormous volumes, furthermore scattered amongst the various ministries and government bodies, gathering agricultural statistics can be a difficult task. Indeed, until recently, this was true of agricultural statistics relating to Syria. If a researcher, a policy-maker, a stake-holder, or even a farmer wanted to gather information, for example, about Syrian beetroot production, trade and prices in between 1990 and 2005, he/she would have had to raid the libraries of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Central Bureau of Statistics, and the Customs Office. It would have been a lengthy and tiring process that may have required traveling over long distances, gaining official access and hours of page flicking before the results were achieved.

Since 2001, however, this lengthy and tiring process has largely become redundant. 2001 was the first year of the life of the Syrian Agricultural Database (SADB), gathered, compiled and represented by the Information and Communications Division of the Syrian National Agricultural Policy Centre (NAPC) with the support of the FAO Project GCP/SYR/006/ITA. Now in its fifth year the NAPC's production of the SADB 2006 once again demonstrates a commitment to accurate, clear, accessible and user-friendly statistics in agriculture. The trip that this researcher, policy-maker, stake-holder, or farmer now needs to make is simply to the screen of an operational computer, through which, either by means of the internet or by the use of the distributed CD-ROM, the user now has at his/her finger-tips a wealth of information in the form of over 700,000 statistical data entries. Both covering the years 1985 to 2005 general and specific information is available. Data is disaggregated by governorate and agro-ecological zone. Data on winter and summer crops, fruit and forest trees, livestock products, crops budgets or main-field and tree crops are offered. Export and import figures for specific products and internal market and wholesale prices are accessible. Data is accessible on grouped product types, such as 'cereals' and 'citruses', 'nuts'. Detailed information on land and water use; irrigation-type and well-development, agricultural inputs; pesticides, machinery, fertilizer, and even census information is at hand. In short the SADB is the most comprehensive one-stop resource for agricultural statistics in Syria, and rivals in its breadth, user-friendliness and availability any data retrieval systems in Europe and North America.

As of 2003 the SADB has been arranged in the user-friendly and internationally recognized format of FAOSTAT. Information can be browsed, statistics and be easily compared and a accurate representation of Syria's agriculture can thus be drawn. The users do not even have to be in Syria to do this, nor do they have to leave their studies. Thanks to the tireless work of the NAPC's Information and Communications Division, in the form of data retrieval, entry and representation, this resource is freely available to anyone who would like to access it. The hope is that Syrian agriculture is better and more easily understood by all interested parties, and therefore that Syrian agriculture continues to develop and improve.

The National Agricultural Policy Centre (NAPC) is a body of the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform specialized in the area of applied economic analysis of Syrian agriculture, supported by the FAO Project GCP/SYR/006/ITA, which is funded by the Italian Cooperation. It is a centre of excellence in research, training and advice for the sustainable development of Syrian agriculture. The NAPC promotes the establishment of a permanent policy forum to enhance dialogue on agricultural issues among stakeholders and policy makers..Within

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