

Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform



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# Mid-Term Review Of The Syrian Agricultural Strategy

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## Policy Note on the Mid-Term Review of the Syrian Agricultural Strategy

After decades of central planning, the Syrian economy has witnessed a gradual evolution in strategic thinking towards liberalization, reliance on market forces, and integration into the international economic system. Those changes have affected all economic sectors, including the agricultural sector, where the general objective of public interventions has been shifting from self-sufficiency to sustainable self-reliance in food, to be pursued through the enhancement of agricultural productivity and sustainability.

In light of these economic changes, the Syrian Agricultural Development Strategy 2001-2010 (SAS) was issued in December 2000. An agricultural strategy embodies both a vision of what the sector should look like in the future and a road map showing how to fulfill that vision. It is a document which sketches a coordinated set of policies designed to pursue socio-economic development objectives. Its building blocks can be seen as three types of interventions, characterized by an increasing degree of specificity, namely:

- a) policies, which are made up of procedures and programs to pursue general objectives like increase productivity, improve marketing conditions, etc.;
- b) programs, which are a group of projects and actions that aim to achieve specific objectives whose goal is the implementation of policies and the achievement of the strategy's objectives and orientations;
- c) actions, which concretely implement the programs specifying their schedule.

For the sake of monitoring and assessing its achievements, the Rural Development Division of the NAPC with the cooperation of the Department of Statistics and Planning of MAAR carried out a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SAS in 2005. The objectives of the MTR are twofold, namely to assess the SAS achievements up to date, and review the strategies up to 2010.

A first task accomplished in the MTR was the reclassification of the original SAS interventions into policies, programs, and actions in order to accommodate the evolution of the SAS objectives since 2000. The SAS originally considered six fields of intervention as follows: natural resources, plant production, livestock production, support services, production inputs, and agricultural policies. The MTR considers five policies disaggregated into sixteen programs, as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Policies and Programs of the SAS Mid-Term Review

<b>Policies</b>	<b>Programs</b>
<b>A – Production</b>	A.1 – Plant production
	A.2 – Livestock production
	A.3 – Inputs
<b>B – Marketing and Processing</b>	B.1 – Pricing
	B.2 – Processing
	B.3 – Marketing
<b>C – International Trade</b>	C.1 – International trade
<b>D – Institutional</b>	D.1 – Research
	D.2 – Extension
	D.3 – Training
	D.4 – Institutions
<b>E – Natural Resources Conservation and Rural Development</b>	E.1 – Land
	E.2 – Water
	E.3 – Forests
	E.4 – Al-Badia
	E.5 – Infrastructures

The next task was an assessment of the SAS achievements to date. The analyses carried out in the MTR are both quantitative and qualitative, depending on the availability of data. The reference year for quantitative analysis is the most recent available year (generally, 2004). For qualitative analysis the attempt is to have as much updated information as possible from the relevant sources.

From a general perspective, the main outcomes of this assessment can be summarized as follows (see also Table 2):

- Plant production has over-achieved the planned targets, but livestock production has not met growth targets (for example, red meat, fish, milk);
- Marketing targets have almost been realized, but processing improvement has been slow (higher emphasis must be devoted to producing surpluses suitable for export markets);
- International trade measures are improving, but more attention must be given to product quality (to meet internationally recognized quality standards);
- Institutional support needs to be further improved (particularly focusing on training institutions establishment and equipment provision);
- Natural resource and rural development is still facing many obstacles (for example, in setting up proper crop rotations; speeding up the conversion to modern irrigation and increasing public irrigation network efficiency; increasing forestation rates; improving the vegetation cover of Al-Badia; and establishing wholesale markets in rural areas).

**Table 2:** An Assessment of SAS Achievements, 2001-2004

<b>Policies</b>	<b>Programs</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>A – Production</b>	A.1 – Plant production	++
	A.2 – Livestock production	=/-
	A.3 – Inputs	=
<b>B – Marketing and Processing</b>	B.1 – Pricing	=
	B.2 – Processing	=/-
	B.3 – Marketing	=
<b>C – International Trade</b>	C.1 – International trade	=/-
<b>D – Institutional</b>	D.1 – Research	=
	D.2 – Extension	+/=
	D.3 – Training	-
	D.4 – Institutions	--
<b>E – Natural Resources Conservation and Rural Development</b>	E.1 – Land	-
	E.2 – Water	-
	E.3 – Forests	-
	E.4 – Al-Badia	=/-
	E.5 – Infrastructures	=/-
Assessment Scale: ++ Achievement beyond expectations; + Over-achievement; = Achievement to expectations; - Achievement below expectations; -- Achievement far below expectations.		

The above implies a revision of the SAS in the period 2006-2010 taking into consideration the following points:

a) Policy Factors:

- Institutional policies (especially institutional reform and training):
  - i. give priority to the agricultural sector,
  - ii. identify the roles of the private, public, cooperative, and joint sectors,
  - iii. change the roles of the public economic institutions (e.g. the General Establishment for Seed Multiplication) towards research institutions,

- iv. encourage a decrease in the number of agricultural decision-making bodies, and
- v. increase the budget devoted to training (e.g. provision of necessary resources, transportation, materials, technology, et cetera).
- Natural resources and rural development policies (especially land, water and infrastructures):
  - i. make agricultural policies more sustainable,
  - ii. increase the available machinery to reclaim mountain and hill areas for agricultural production,
  - iii. introduce alternative crops within crop rotations,
  - iv. increase the efficiency of public irrigation schemes and expand the irrigated area, and
  - v. increase the provision of required infrastructure, such as roads and markets, in rural areas.
- Marketing and international trade policies (especially quality):
  - i. increase the value added by means of enhancing agro-processing activities based on international standards,
  - ii. focus on the production of commodities that enjoy comparative advantages,
  - iii. establish a market information system to efficiently distribute information to producers, processors, and decision-makers.
- b) Demographic factors: the high population growth rate, particularly in rural areas, is creating a need for improving infrastructures, promoting investments, and diversifying income resources. These factors must receive due attention in order to create new opportunities for rural populations.
- c) Financial factors: these are related to the type and size of government expenditure devoted to agriculture and the volume of subsidies offered to some agricultural products. Subsidies should be compatible with the rules and regulations of the WTO as well as the policies adopted by other countries. Moreover, they should maintain the objective of enhancing quantity as well as the quality of the agricultural products.

### **References:**

- De Benedictis, M., 2000. *A Framework on the Elaboration of an Agricultural Development Strategy for Syria*. Project GCP/SYR/006/ITA Final Report. Damascus, February 2000.
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