

Research Paper

Analysis of the Roles of Traditional and Modern Agriculture in the Sustainability of Rural Communities with Regard to the Rural Web Theory

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ABSTRACT

The rural community in *Mazandaran* is characterized by agricultural traits and rice cultivation. Indeed, agriculture plays an important role in the social, cultural, economic and environmental relations of rural communities in this province. Considering two types of agriculture, this study aims at the relationship between them and a sustainable system which farmers believe can be achieved in farming. The research method was both quantitative and qualitative. In the quantitative part, a questionnaire was used to collect the data. The farmers that were selected were those who had experience with modern agriculture under the influence of agricultural development programs. In the qualitative part, interviews were conducted with a sample of 20 farmers until data saturation. In this research, a sample of three villages around the city of Amol was selected where the farmers had experience with both traditional and modern agricultural systems. The findings show that, in terms of sustainability, there is a fundamental difference between traditional and modern agricultural practices. Based on the results of the analysis, traditional agriculture has a direct impact on sustainability, and farmers are aware of this. However, where the economy is prevailed by profit attitudes and the other sectors are not involved in agriculture, circumstances are not in line with sustainability.

Key words:

Traditional agriculture, Modern agriculture, Theoretical model of rural network, Sustainability, *Mazandaran*

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The rural community in *Mazandaran* is characterized by agricultural traits and rice cultivation. In that province, agriculture plays an important role in the social, cultural, economic and environmental relations of rural communities. In the process of devel-

opment, however, agriculture has undergone fundamental changes. This research analyzes traditional and modern states of agriculture and sheds light on their relationship with the concept of sustainability. Also, the perspectives of farmers are sought to determine which type of farming can better achieve sustainability.

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2. Methodology

This research was conducted through quantitative and qualitative methods. The data collection tool was a questionnaire and a deep interview to confirm the villagers' responses. The statistical population of the study consisted of the residents of the villages of Assi Mahallah, Ojai Abad and Myrrud in the district of Haraz-e-Pul-Amul. There are three villages in the southeast of Haraz with 658 households. As many as 77 farmers who practiced both types of farming were identified and selected. In the qualitative part of the study, interviews with open questions were performed, and those who participated in the deep interview were 20. The interviews were continued until data saturation. Among those who took the questionnaires, some individuals were randomly selected for interviews and open-ended questionnaires so that traditional and modern agriculture systems would be delved into more deeply. The questionnaire collected the data by seeking the participants' levels of agreement including 'I agree with the three criteria.', 'I disagree', and 'It is unobtrusive'. The percentage of each response was recorded in a table. Similarly, after the interviews in which open-ended responses were given, those responses were analyzed and recorded in a table. Finally, the data reliability was measured through a review of the descriptions and the respondents' views.

3. Results

In this study, sustainable agriculture was studied with three socio-cultural, environmental and economic components. For each of these components, several variables or criteria were examined for sustainability. The accepted pattern involved a significant relationship between these variables and sustainability. From the villagers' point of view, socio-cultural and environmental domains in traditional agriculture are consistent with the concept of sustainability. Considering the theoretical model of rural networks, which focuses on the continuous reproduction and revival of local rural networks, the components emphasized by the farmers who have been in traditional agriculture should be reproduced and restored. In other words, the development of agriculture within its own rural network calls for a combination of individuals, resources, activities and processes that are interconnected and jointly form economic, social, cultural, and environmental relations. Therefore, in the development of agriculture, which must be sustained, social capital, new institutional frameworks, market management, proper production, and indigenization are necessary. Based on the results of the analysis, it can be said that traditional agriculture has a direct impact

on sustainability, and farmers are aware of this. However, where agriculture is prevailed by profit mentality and other sectors are not involved in it, the conditions go against sustainability.

4. Discussion

As it is known, 63% of the world's total population and 73% of the poor live in rural areas, and between 30% and 60% of the GDO in developing countries is from agriculture. Also, with the rapid growth of urbanization, 50% of poor people in rural areas will be even poorer by 2035 and dependent on agriculture. For these reasons, the principle of sustainability in agriculture must be strongly emphasized and addressed in rural development.

There is a lot of evidence for the instability of modern agriculture in Iran. The characteristics of persistence in the traditional agriculture of Iran are lost due to the arrival of modern agriculture. *Mazandaran* province, as an agricultural pole of agriculture in Iran, was affected by modern agriculture and lost many components that were in harmony with the community and the environment. In the present study, the assumption is made that agriculture in the province of *Mazandaran* has walked away from its traditional state and transferred to modern agriculture. This transfer can be translated into a kind of instability. This research has sought to examine the rate of conversion of traditional agriculture to modern agriculture and its effect on the issue of sustainability.

5. Conclusion

As rural farming moves towards modernization, more and more adverse effects are exerted on rural sustainability. Now that development is occurring in rural areas of Iran, traditional agriculture is giving the floor to mechanized agriculture. It should be emphasized that, by using theoretical models of rural development, the development process can be directed in such a way that it leads to the sustainability of rural communities.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest