
ABSTRACT

Research Theme: Social Implication of Water Users Association / Tank Association in Managing Natural Resources.

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Research Project: The complete title of the project is « Local Practices and Public Policies, Sustainability of the Resource Availability for irrigation in Tamil Nadu : needs and management ».

The Agricultural Development has relied during the last few decades on water-consuming crops and on the use of groundwater, without any stock management control. The water crisis is currently aggravated by increasing needs and overuse of groundwater resulting in depletion of water tables. What are the alternatives to control the overuse of groundwater?

Formation of local Water Users Association, tank rehabilitation, less-water-consuming paddy cultivation methods, less-water-required-crop incentive programs by Government and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have recently been started to mitigate water crisis.

- This project addresses the following questions:
- How do the farmers react to these policies?
- How do they represent and react to water issues?

The main objectives of the present research program are to analyse the implications of such developmental policies on farmers' practices and on social vulnerability, and to compare the perception of various stakeholders on the water issue within the framework of sustainability of resource availability.

The three following research streams will be developed:

- developmental policies vs. farmers' organisation on irrigation management: from global decisions to local action ; irrigators' participation and local governance; impact on farmers' vulnerability and sustainable agriculture.
- farmers' knowledge about the use of groundwater and the new pumping techniques.
- spatial aspects of the dynamics of irrigation or the "water territories ". Availability, management, various uses and sources of water define the different "natural and human territories ", that are not delimited by administrative boundaries. Implications of such differences while implementing water policies will be investigated by a working group, that is currently being formed.
- The project has strong connections with the microfinance research project as regards with the local governance issue as well as the vulnerability issue (sub-project « debt bondage »).