

Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Goubellat Irrigation Perimeters Construction Project

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Criteria-1 (Impact)

The irrigation perimeter of Goubellat, which is located in a semi-arid region and stretches over an area of 2,900 ha, is one of the main lines of the general strategy of agricultural development, notably the mobilisation, the safeguard and the rational exploitation of the water resources.

The implementation of the intensive irrigated cropping, in an area which was totally oriented toward a large-scale rain-fed farming and toward a cropping system relying on fallow lands, has a visible impact on the beneficiaries' living standard and on the economic development of the project area in particular:

- ✓ Employment creation: based on the study conducted on 101 farm households selected among 236 benefited farm households of the project, it was noticed that the project has led to the creation of 52,917 working days, including 46,312 working days for women, which contributed to their social development.
- ✓ Annual farm income: Considering the same sample, it was noticed that approximately 34% of the total number of farm households have an annual income that is close or above the Tunisian average which is 7,500 TD.
- ✓ Farm households' asset ownership: A noticeable uptrend of the project beneficiaries' standard of living was perceived through their purchases of means of transport as well as family equipments such as satellite dishes and mobile phones.

Moreover, a stability of the farm population before and after the project and an improvement of the social context were noticed; however, currently it is not possible to confirm that these are the direct effects of the project.

It is important to mention that according to the ex-post evaluation outcomes, the project implementation did not cause negative environmental impacts precisely on the salinity of the irrigated lands.

Criteria-2 (Sustainability)

The management of the irrigated area of Goubellat is carried out by the technical department of the CRDA (Commissariat Régional au Développement Agricole) of Béja, pertaining to the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources and by the two GDA (Groupement de Développement Agricole). The maintenance and exploitation of the pumping stations, the reservoir and the main canals (having a diameter more than 400 mm) is carried out by the CRDA departments. The two GDA are in charge of the management and maintenance of the tertiary and lower-ranked canals (having a diameter less than 400mm). The CTV (Cellule Territoriale de Vulgarisation), pertaining to the CRDA, is in charge of providing guidance on irrigation and planting for the farmers. Regarding the technical aspect, despite the fact that the CRDA provides almost no guidance, the two GDA are implementing the maintenance program adequately. In this same regard, the technical departments of CRDA, together with the available human resources and logistics, succeed in maintaining the good functioning of the network and in ensuring the irrigation water supply to farmers. Nonetheless, for a better maintenance of the tertiary and lower-ranked canals, it is preferable that the CRDA provides guidance and assistance to the GDA.

Since 2005, the two GDA budget were in surplus due to the appropriate collection rate of irrigation fees and water selling for the irrigation is likely to further increase as usage of irrigation increases for cultivation of tomatoes and potatoes (considered to be water-requiring plants).

There are no commercialisation difficulties of agricultural products of the project area given the proximity of the project to the big city Tunis, which is accounted for as the largest consumer.