

The Urban–Agricultural Interface in Urbanizing Arab Localities: Farmers’ Perceptions

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Abstract

The ongoing process of urbanization in Arab localities—typically driven by self-built housing and the encroachment of expanding built-up areas into surrounding agricultural land—has substantially transformed these settlements demographically, physically, and economically. This process has also altered the local economic base, shifting it from agriculture toward non-agricultural employment. The objective of this study is to examine the perceptions of farmers and key stakeholders regarding the urban–agricultural interface, to identify the barriers they face, and to understand the survival strategies adopted by agricultural households. In addition, the study presents updated and reliable data on the current state of agriculture and agricultural households in the context of urban expansion in two case-study localities: Baka al-Gharbiyye and Jatt.

To address these issues, in-depth interviews were conducted with local officials and farm owners in the urbanizing localities. The interviews aimed to capture the pressures exerted by urban expansion on agricultural land, as well as the existence of economic, social, local, institutional, and national barriers to sustainable agricultural development. The interviews served two main purposes. First, they enabled the identification of general characteristics of agricultural households in the two study sites, including age, gender, education, secondary occupations, and average household income. Second, they provided insights into the key characteristics of agricultural activity, such as the type of farming, land resources, and patterns of agricultural land use. The underlying assumption of this study is that, from the farmers’ perspective, agriculture remains an important source of income for the households they represent and that it may remain viable even under increasing urbanization pressures.

Keywords: urbanization process; non-agricultural activity; urban–agricultural interface; household.