

Explaining the Consequences of Agricultural Land Use Change in Rural Areas Over the Past Two Decades With the Environmental Planning Approach (Case Study: Sari County)

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Abstract At present, the indiscriminate agricultural land use change is one of the major challenges facing agriculture and villages in Iran. Because the land use change removes much of the agricultural land the production cycle annually; and if only the short and medium term economic benefits are taken into account, the strategic significance of the villages and the country in terms of economic and environmental issues is seriously threatened. Accordingly, the main purpose of this research is the explanation of the consequences of agricultural land use change in rural areas during the last two decades with environmental perception approach. This is a case study on 25 villages in Sari city by descriptive-analysis method. The statistical population included the households of these villages ($n=19642$). Using Cochran theorem, the sample size determined as 381 and the share of each village was determined by randomized stratified-quota sampling. The results of the analyses descriptive and inferential statistics showed that the area of agricultural lands decreased by 6% during 2004 to 2015, and this decrease for arable lands was 25.4%. This decline has resulted in tangible loss of rain-fed products such as rice, wheat and barley. This decline in agricultural land and agricultural output has had a great impact on the rural population dynamics. As the villages close to the city and the sea due to the proximity to the city benefit job opportunities and the use of urban services and infrastructure, inexpensive life expenses (especially in area of housing) and, agricultural land use change and turning them into residential building has a negative effect on growth of population of these villages. And in remote villages due to lack of access and desirable services and facilities, the value added of agricultural lands

resulting land use change leads to the population decline process in these villages. On the one hand, with the proliferation of land sales and the increase in unauthorized construction due to weak local management, as well as weak land-use change regulations, the natural landscape of the village faces serious challenges, and this can make villages vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes and landslides.

Keywords : Keywords: Agricultural lands, Land use change, Rural areas, Sari country

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