

## Increasing Food Security in Dry Areas of the Middle East

The project also is expected to increase income for farmers. *Transcript of radio broadcast:*  
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This is the VOA Special English Development Report.

Agricultural experts have launched a land and water management project in the Middle East. The project seeks to increase food security in dry areas. Researchers say the water availability in some of the areas has dropped well below the internationally recognized standard.



Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank, Syria and Yemen are all taking part in the project. It is part of a larger ten-year effort called the Water and Livelihoods Initiative. The project is also expected to increase household income for farmers in the areas.

The United States Agency for International Development provided one million dollars for the Water and Livelihoods Initiative. Scott Christianson is an agricultural development advisor with U.S.A.I.D. He helped develop the project while working for the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas. He says the countries taking part in the project were all carefully selected.

**The project is seeking ideas from farmers to develop research programs**

SCOTT CHRISTIANSON: "They all share a socio-economic and cultural heritage that's fairly homogeneous. We feel that it's going to maximize our opportunity for trading of knowledge that we will generate in the project."

Research by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas and its partners has already proven to be successful. New irrigation methods are expected to double wheat production while using one-third of the water required for full irrigation. Experts say the new methods also increase crop production up to five times more than crops that depend on rainfall only.

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas will provide technical support for the project. Officials from the **International Water Management Institute** and the International Food Policy Research Institute are also taking part in the effort.

Each team will be joined by experts from local research institutions, universities and government agencies.

SCOTT CHRISTIANSON: "We have good partnerships among the countries within each agro-eco system so that through this twinning they can learn lessons from each other and work together effectively through time."

Scott Christianson and other officials met in Amman, Jordan last week. They attended an international conference on food security and climate change in dry areas. Nearly one-fourth of the world's people live in these areas.

Officials say more must be done to deal with water shortages in agriculture. If not, they say, the future of food security, economic development and social stability in dry areas will be put at risk.

And that's the VOA Special English Development Report, written by June Simms. I'm Steve Ember.

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