FARMERS’ PARTICIPATION IN WATER USER ASSOCIATION IN WESTERN IRAN

Abstract

One of the main challenges of water scarcity is the water consumption in the agriculture sector. Therefore, optimizing water consumption and applying an optimal management in the agriculture sector is necessary. The implementation of a participatory management of water resources in the rural areas and the creation of Water User Association (WUA) can be a successful approach towards this management. That requires the continuity of the management, the comprehensive participation of farmers, and the exploitation of water resources; however, this action needs to understand the factors affecting the behavior of consumers. Thus identifying the factors influencing farmers’ intentions towards participation in WUA is essential. The purpose of this study is to identify factors affecting farmers' intentions towards participation in water user association, by theory of planned behavior (TPB). There are 21 agriculture water pumping stations active in Lorestan Province. Farmers at each agriculture water pumping stations make up a Water User Association. The population of this study consisted of all WUAs in western Iran ($N = 1990$), and through a proportional stratified random sampling technique farmers were selected ($N = 133$) from the population. Moreover, the validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by a panel of experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated at pre-test stage for different parts of the questionnaire ranging from 0.83 until 0.91. The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20 software. The results revealed that there were effective variables including subjective norm, attitude, and extension training courses which contributed to the importance of participation in the water management, and that the educational level of farmer was a controlled variable that could affect farmers' attitudes towards participating in Water User Association; these factors could explain 53% of farmers' participation totally.

Key words: intensions, Iran, theory of planned behavior (TPB), water resources management, Water User Association (WUA)