

## Development Programs and its Consequences on the Occupational Structure of Rural Iran (1956 to 2006)

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**Abstract:** Iran has experienced significant changes in the distribution of employed population of rural areas in major professional categories in the years 1956 to 2006. Accordingly, it is important to study the changes in occupational structure, factors influencing these changes, and their implications. The methodology of this study is documentary and secondary analysis. Moreover, in order to explain why the changes were made, the development plans before and after the Islamic Revolution were examined. Findings indicate that the number of workers in agricultural sector during the years 1956, 1966, 1976, 1986, 1996 and 2006 was 74.3, 61.7, 58.9, 57.7, 49.75, and 43.94 percent, respectively. According to the statistics, there has been a gradual reduction of the number of workers in the agricultural sector. Results also show that the average age of workers in the agricultural sector during the years 1966, 1976, 1986, 1996 and 2006 was 34.3, 37.6, 40.4, 40.5, and 40 years, respectively. The results of documentary studies suggests that oil price upward spiraling followed by the reduction of government's dependence on agriculture, implementation of the Land Reform Plan regardless of the social and cultural structure of the rural population on one hand, and, on the other hand, the tendency of the governments before and after the Revolution towards mechanized agriculture without the necessary scientific and practical background have been major factors in the irrational reduction of workers in the agricultural sector. Among the most important social and economic consequences of this situation are the aging of workforce employed in agriculture, the decline of agricultural development, the growth of false occupations, and the development of oil economy.

**Keywords:** Iranian rural population, Development programs, occupational structure, agricultural.

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### Introduction

Agriculture is of vital importance to all countries, especially the developing countries, and paying no attention to changes in this sector will cause severe damages to society. By examining the population changes in Iran, we realize that the population growth rate is relatively high. For example, the average annual population growth rates in Iran in the years 1956 to 1966, 1966 to 1976 and 1976 to 1986 have been 3.1, 2.7 and 3.9 percent respectively ((Statistical Center of Iran). This rate of growth, along with factors such as the relative rise in incomes, considerable changes in lifestyle and increase in demand for agricultural products have increased Iran's dependence on agricultural products. Also, statistics show that the urbanization rate in Iran has been too rapid and illogical; in the national censuses conducted in the years 1956, 1966, 1976, 1986, 1996 and 2006, the urbanization rate was 31.4, 38, 47, 54.3, 61.3 and 68.4 percent respectively (Statistical Center of Iran). This has had its own outcomes such as a

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progressive decrease in rural population, decrease in the number of employment population in agricultural sector, increase in dependency ratio in the rural society, and decrease in self-sufficiency of Iran in the agricultural sector; the technological problems in the mechanization of agriculture have aggravated these problems and their negative outcomes. The statistics published by The Central Bank of Iran show that the mechanization coefficient has decreased from 7 percent, in the beginning of the Second Program, to 5.5 percent in 2001. One of the objectives of the Development Program has been reducing seasonal and apparent unemployment in the rural sector, especially in the agricultural sector; however, the statistics reveal that dependency ratio in the rural area has increased from 3.1 percent in 1956 to 4.08 percent in 1996 (Statistical Center of Iran). Also, in the 2006 census the unemployment rate in Iran increased from 9.1 percent to 12.7 percent; to put it more accurately, the urban unemployment rate increased from 8.8 to 11.8, and the rural unemployment rate increased from 9.4 to 14.7 (Statistical Center of Iran). Because of the problems of transformational industries in Iran, the products distributed in the domestic market are of poor quality and cannot be exported to foreign markets. The results of Qanbari's study in 2008 are relevant here:

“because of the traditional infrastructures and marketing methods (35 percent losses), Kurdistan, the biggest producer of strawberry in the country, has failed to take advantage of this natural opportunity to increase farmers' income, and despite the low price of the product at harvest time, Kurdistan has not been able to export it” (Qanbari, 2008).

In the same study it is remarked that, since strawberry has relative social advantage and profitability, and requires a larger workforce compared to other agricultural products, developing strawberry fields can play a role in reducing unemployment, and creating jobs (Ibid, 2008). Furthermore, it should be noted that in this situation, the exploitable resources of water and soil in Iran can be increased by 10 to 15 percent, but this trend will stop at a particular level, while the need for food and population will continue to grow. At the moment, production and productivity in the agricultural sector in the developed countries is 2.5 times as much as those of Iran ([www.danepairie.com](http://www.danepairie.com)).

### **Research Objectives**

1. An analysis of rural population distribution in the major groups of activity (agriculture, industry and services) in the years 1956 to 2006, with an emphasis on agricultural sector.
2. An analysis of social and economic factors influencing the changes in the distribution of the working population of rural areas of Iran in the major groups of activity, with an emphasis on agricultural sector, in the same period.
3. An analysis of the social and economic outcomes of the qualitative and quantitative changes in the agricultural sector of the rural areas of Iran.

### **Theoretical Approach**

As an important part of development process on a national scale and in order to analyze the social, political and economic transformations in Iran, rural development has been considered a necessity and formed an essential part of the development policy since 1941. Such necessity has been affected by development discourse, global change, and the experiences of other developing countries (Zahedi, Ghaffari, and Ebrahimi Louyeh, 2013: 2). Inspired by the patterns of growth and development in modernization as recommended by the Western countries and international organizations whose primary aim were the release of rural labor force to work in the industry as well as the industrialization of cities, Third World countries began to prepare their development plans. In Iran, after World War II and in the reign of Reza Shah, development thought became operational and materialized; it soon became associated with the planning and keeping of the government. Obviously, development plans in Iran have been influenced by reformers' attitude towards socio-economic development. In Iran, this attitude followed the paradigm of economic growth in the early 1950s and 1960s; therefore, it stressed the growth in GDP and per capita income regardless of income distribution and social inequality. Several studies indicate the dominance of views emerging from modernization in Iranian development

programs. In line with this, the main features of development planning in Iran include the dominance of positivist approaches, top-down centralized planning, and sectorized and short-term planning (Zahedi, Ghaffari, Ebrahimi Louyeh, 2013: 14). Likewise, government's keeping and management, implementation of the Land Reform Plan regardless of socio-economic structure of rural society in Iran (Azkia, 2005 and 1986; Taleb and Anbari, 2008) and ambitious objectives in development became the agenda of reformers. To achieve these goals, the structure of production and employment in the rural community of the country was targeted. Due to the attention devoted to the growth of GDP and to the priority of quantitative and mechanical dimensions of development, this approach led to some problems like income inequality, unemployment, and enfeeblement of agricultural sector (Azkia and Imani, 2008). On the other hand, the speed and extent of economic and political transformations in the country, including rising oil price and the Land Reform of 1961, led to inappropriate migration of villagers to urban areas (Vosoughi, 1998). Also, reduction of rural development to physical changes (such as the construction of roads, utilities, etc.), which was also influenced by the modernization approach in rural development, paved the way for further disorganization of occupational structure in rural communities. Accordingly, the analytical approach in this paper is based on the above theoretical arguments. Following these arguments, development plans and their impacts on the occupational structure of rural population in Iran from 1956 to 2006 will be discussed.

### Research Methodology

In terms of typology, the present study is a quantitative-descriptive research. To collect the data, - the secondary data for our purpose - statistical centers such as Statistical Center of Iran and Central Bank of Iran were consulted; and the collected data were analyzed to describe the employment trend in the agricultural sector of the rural areas of Iran. In order to learn about the social and economic factors influencing the agricultural sector, the quality and quantity of allocation of fund to the agricultural sector during the Development Programs before and after the Islamic Revolution, and the research conducted on the state of country's agriculture in this period, were closely studied.

### Research Findings

**Table (1): The distribution of active population in terms of the state of activity in different rural and urban areas in the 1956 census (percent)**

State of Activity	The Whole Country	Urban	Rural
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Percentage of employed population	97.4	95.5	98.2
Agricultural	54.8	11.6	74.3
Industrial products	19.6	35.4	12.4
Other	23.0	48.5	11.5
Seasonal unemployed and job-seekers	2.6	4.5	1.8

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, <http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census/1956/census1956.Results>.

As shown in Table 1, more than 98 percent of the active rural population had a job in 1956: 74.3 percent in the agricultural sector, 12.4 percent in the industrial sector and 11.5 percent in other sectors. Since service jobs were not defined in the 1335 census, roughly speaking, we can consider the percentage of employed population in other sectors as employed population in service activities. The unemployed and job-seekers constituted 1.8 percent of the rural population. Therefore, it can be concluded that the largest percentage of the employed population of the rural areas in 1956 worked in the agricultural sector.

To analyze the situation discussed above we can review the Developmental Program of the first seven years (1949-1955). In 1949 the Iranian parliament passed the Seven-Year Developmental Program, and 21 billion rials was allocated to this program which was distributed among different sectors as follows; Agriculture 24.8 percent, railway and roadway 23.8 percent, industries 14.3 percent, oil 4.8 percent, telecommunications 3.6 percent and social services 28.6 (Hariri Akbari, 2008: 183). Although the First

Program was implemented only for two years and was primarily intended to contribute to the development of agriculture, it only played a minor part in the development of factories and productivity (Ghasemi, 2008). With regard to the success of this program in accomplishing its goals, Azkia and Ghaffari (2004) maintain that:

“The First Program was designed and implemented in a situation in which, because of the existence of feudal system in the rural areas, the central government did not have enough influence in these areas, and consequently the developmental objectives, especially with regard to increasing the income and improving the quality of life in the rural society, were not fully accomplished. At the beginning of the developmental program, government lost its full authority over the rural society and the agricultural sector, to a great extent” (Azkia and Ghaffari, 2004: 112-113).

They believe that: “when a program is administered from above and government takes responsibility for implementing it, as in the case of the First Developmental Program in Iran, this significantly grows in importance” (Ibid: 112).

**Table (2): The distribution of active population in terms of the state of activity in different rural and urban areas in the 1966 census (percent).**

State of Activity	The Whole Country	Urban	Rural
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Percentage of employed population	90.8	94.6	88.8
Agricultural	41.8	7.0	61.7
Industrial products	24.2	36.4	17.3
Other	24.8	51.2	9.8
Seasonal unemployed	4.8	0.5	7.2
Job-seekers	4.4	4.9	4.0

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, [http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census\\_1966/census\\_1966.Results](http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census_1966/census_1966.Results).

Table 2 indicates that the employment rate in all major groups of activity, especially in the agricultural sector has decrease drastically compared that of the year 1956; the employment rate in the major groups of activity changed into 61.7 percent in the agricultural sector, 17.3 percent in the industrial production sector, and 9.8 percent in other job activities. Among the important points in this Table are the substantial decrease in the rate of employment in the rural population, from 98.2 percent in 1956 to 88.8 percent in 1966, and the increase in unemployment rate. About the situation of the agricultural sector in the years 1956 to 1966, it can be said that in the Second Developmental Program, developed in 1955 and implemented no sooner than 1962, the agricultural sector was the economic infrastructure and the pivot of the program and was consistent with the theories of the economic development of the Third World from the viewpoint of imperialism (Hariri Akbari, 2008: 174). Moreover, in the Second Program;

“Two main policies were supported for the development of agriculture: developing the cultivated land, and improving the exploitation of land. Although improving the land was prior to expanding the cultivated land, two third of the agricultural land was dedicated to wheat and barley. The outcome the agricultural plans of the Second Program was unsatisfactory, which was because of the insufficient fund allocated to the implementation of the predicted agricultural plans and the long period of time required for the development and transformation of agriculture” (Seddiqi and Samimi, 2001: 10).

The fund allocated to the Third Developmental Program, implemented in the years 1963 to 1967, was 204.6 billion rials, which was distributed as follows:

“Agriculture and irrigation 23.1 percent, communications and telecommunications 26.3 percent, industry and mining 8.4 percent, fuel and power 15.6 percent, and social services 26.6 percent. This program was similar to the other two in terms of the distribution of the fund among different sectors; however, in the beginning of this program land reforms was put into practice, which was most the

important agricultural project in terms of costs. In fact, the capitalist economic development model in Iran changed its policies from the beginning of this program; however, its manifestation in costs was more visible in the Fourth and Fifth Programs” (Hariri Akbari, 2008: 184). In this period according to Seifollahi (1995):

“The influence of capitalism in Iran, broke off the old Arbab-Raiyati relations and put the agricultural economy of Iran, which was once the main source of income for the country and the political management, in the direction of capitalist economy. Realizing that the influence of capitalism caused the traditional trade activity to change, tradesmen started to buy property, garden and land, and landowners, who had felt the menace to the trend of the economy in Iran, turned to trade, acted as dealers, participated in financial affairs and became involved in assembly industry. These two groups, i.e. tradesmen and owners, tried to maintain their presence in the economy, and finally after the White Revolution of 1962 they gained a pivotal position in the economy and politics of Iran and, with the aid of foreign investment, they paved the way for the establishment of peripheral capitalist agricultural sector in Iran” (Seifollahi, 1995: 82-84).

The interesting point about the changes occurred in the years 1956 to 1966 is that although in the second and third programs a lot of emphasis was put on the agricultural sector and the related investment, the situation deteriorated severely. According to Katoozian “the main reason for the poor agricultural performance of Iran was, the policy-makers’ stance on agriculture as a superfluous part of the political economy” (Katoozian, 2006: 358-359). Therefore, the increase of employment in the agricultural sector and large-scale emigration to cities are among the important outcomes of the reduction of the dependence of government on agricultural sector, which was in turn due to the soaring price of oil and the consequent increase in the financial power of the government.

**Table (3): The distribution of the 10-year active population in terms of the state of activity in different rural and urban areas in the 1976 census.**

State of Activity*	Whole country		Urban		Rural	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	8799420	100.0	4112636	100.0	4686784	100.0
Agriculture	2991869	34	230589	5.6	2761280	58.9
Industry	3012300	34.2	1562833	38	1449467	30.9
Services	2720562	30.9	2270899	55.2	449663	9.6
Not mentioned	74689	0.9	48315	1.2	26374	0.6

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, [http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census\\_1976/census\\_1976.Results](http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census_1976/census_1976.Results).

\* The information belongs to the non-resident population.

The fourth Developmental Program (1968-1972) was intended to boost the national income through increasing the production power on the basis of industrial development, decrease Iran’s dependence on foreign countries and diversify the export goods (Ghasemi, 2008). And in the Fourth Program, if we note that more than half of the water and agriculture costs belonged to water, especially the drinking water of the cities, the change in the direction of development in Iran becomes more evident (Hariri Akbari, 2008: 184). Also according to Akbari, in the Fifth Developmental Program;

“Due to the increase in oil income and the consequent increase in funds, costs in different areas increased; the most important costs belonged to the communications and telecommunications sector, and the highest production costs belonged to industry and mining. However, the non-production costs had escalated considerably. In the five Development Programs before the Revolution, with a fund of 4155 billion rials (mainly from oil incomes), an enormous amount of money was spent to establish an infrastructural economic network. In the first two Programs, the agricultural development was the most important objective, and in the other three Programs, especially the Fourth and the Fifth Programs, industrial development received most attention” (Ibid: 185).

In the 1970s and 1980s little attention was paid by the political management to the socio-cultural structure of the agricultural society. About the state of agriculture in this period Katoozian (2006) states that:

“The government showed no interest in the development of agriculture; the government desperately wanted to establish a small “modern” agricultural sector through disastrous methods such as developing industry and establishing agricultural companies, and change the majority of the rural population into urbanized hired agents. Even Mohammad Reza Shah, in 1973 (before the explosion of oil revenues), happily announced that no more than 2 million people will be working on lands by 1980” (Katoozian, 2006: 353-354).

Furthermore about the state of agriculture in this period Baseri and Jahangard (2007) states that: “In the years 1966 to 1976, despite the economic boom in Iran, employment in the agricultural sector decreased, which was because of the mechanization of agriculture and the replacement of workforce by capital; however, the area of the cultivated land for different products was expanded. In this period, despite the rapid growth in the area of the cultivated land compared to the workforce, more than 60 percent of the agricultural families had no land of their own, and could only find seasonal employment with low productivity”.

**Table (4): The population of the people employed for 6 years or more, in terms of the state of activity in different rural and urban areas in 1986.**

State of activity	Whole country		Urban		Rural	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	11001551	100.0	5953031	100.0	4987504	100.0
Agriculture	3190764	29.00	312244	5.3	2878520	57.7
Industry*	2781012	25.3	1762671	29.6	1015312	20.2
Services**	4670048	42.4	3633151	61	1033551	20.1
Unclassifiable	359727	3.3	244965	1.4	113954	2

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, [http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census\\_1986/census\\_1986.Results](http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census_1986/census_1986.Results).

(The information belongs to the non-resident population).

\* Including mining, industry, water, electricity, gas and building.

\*\* Including, wholesale, retail, restaurant, hotel, transit, communication, storage, financial dealings, insurance, property, law and trade, public services, social and personal.

Table 4 shows that the employment rate in the agricultural sector continues to decrease in this period, and there are more signs of modernization in the Iranian society than in the past. The percentage of the employment population in the agricultural sector decreased from 34 percent in 1355 to 29 percent in 1986, and the rate of employment in industry and service sectors increased in this period. It should be noted that the developmental programs after the Islamic Revolution kept their inharmonious and unrealistic structure, and the modernization trend continued to exert a considerable influence on the model of development of Iran. About the reasons of decrease in unemployment rate in the years 1976 to 1986, Baseri and Jahangard (2007) maintain that:

“This period coincided with the increase of mechanization coefficient in agricultural sector; however, at the end of this period because of the war and the economic sanctions, mechanization of agriculture slowed down. Although the cultivated land grew in size, employment in agricultural sector decreased, one of the economic reasons for which was the growing mechanization of this sector. In fact, the main reason for the decrease in the employment rate in this period was the decrease in production, and the economic recession resulting from the revolution, war, economic sanctions and the decrease in the accumulation of capital”.

**Table (5): The population of the people employed for at least ten years in terms of the state of activity in different rural and urban areas in 1996 (numbers are to be multiplied by one thousand).**

State of activity	Whole country		Urban		Rural	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	14572	100	8799	100	5711	100
Agriculture	3358	23.04	461	5.2	284	49.75
Industry*	4473	30.7	2937	33.8	1531	26.81
Services**	6484	44.5	5225	59	1258	22
Unclassifiable	257	1.76	176	2	80	1.44

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, [http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census\\_1996/census\\_1996.Results](http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census_1996/census_1996.Results).

\* Including mining, industry, water, electricity, gas and building.

\*\* Including, wholesale, retail, restaurant, hotel, transit, communication, storage, financial dealings, real estate, rent, business, obligatory social security, education, hygiene and social and personal service, offices and headquarters, organizations, overseas councils, public services.

According to the statistics published by the Statistical Center of Iran, the percentage of the active rural population in 1996 declined considerably compared to that of the years 1986 and 1991. The percentage of the active rural population in the years 1986, 1991 and 1996 has been 39.67, 38.60 and 37.62 percent respectively (Statistical Center of Iran). Also, Table 4 and Table 5 indicate that the employment rate in rural areas in the years 1986 and 1996, in all major groups of activity, especially in agricultural sector, changed markedly. Employment rate in the major groups of activity in years 1986 to 1996 changed from 57.7 percent in agriculture, 20.2 percent in industry, and 20.1 percent in services, to 49.75 percent in agriculture, 26.81 percent in industry and 22 percent in services. As it can be seen in this Table, there is a considerable decrease in employment in agricultural sector, while the unemployment rate in the rural population has increased. In the years 1986 to 1996, simultaneous with the first Development Program (after the Islamic Revolution), the number of specialists in the agricultural sector increased, yet most of these specialists could not enhance their skill. Because of the disproportion between the educated workforce and the agricultural labor market, deconstruction in the agricultural sector, and its low productivity in comparison to other sectors, the number of the specialists in this sector was small.

**Table (6): The population of the people employed for at least ten years in terms of the state of activity in different rural and urban areas in 2006 (numbers are to be multiplied by one thousand).**

State of activity	Whole country*		Urban		Rural	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	20407	100	14055	100	6087	100
Agriculture	3687	18	675	4.8	2675	43.94
Industry**	4616	31.71	47.18	33.56	1774	29.14
Services***	9808	47.91	8299	59.04	1514	24.87
Unclassifiable	488	2.38	363	2.6	124	2.05

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, [http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census\\_2006.Results](http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/census_2006.Results).

\* The umbers belonging to non-resident population are put only in the columns of the whole country.

\*\* Including mining, industry, water, electricity, gas and building.

\*\*\* Including, wholesale, retail, restaurant, hotel, transit, communication, storage, financial dealings, real estate, rent, business, obligatory social security, education, hygiene and social and personal service, offices and headquarters, organizations, overseas councils, public services.

Unlike the years 1986 to 1996, when there was a decrease in the active population of the rural areas, in 2006 there was an increase of more than 3 percent in the active population; the percentage of the active rural population increased from 37.64 percent in 1996 to 40.85 percent in 2006 (Statistical Center of Iran). However, as shown in Table 5, the active population of the agricultural sector in 2006 experienced a 5.81 percent decrease compared to the active population in 1996. It can be said that the increase in the active population resulted from people's tendency toward industry and services; however, the rate of

employment in the major groups of activity in 2006 changed to 43.94 percent in agricultural sector, 29.14 percent in industrial sector and 24.87 percent in services. According to the 2006 census, the unemployment rate increased from 9.1 percent to 12.7 percent; to put it more accurately, the rate of urban unemployment increased from 8.8 percent to 11.8 percent, and that of the rural unemployment increased from 9.4 to 14.7. Since the highest rate of unemployment belongs to agricultural sector which is due to the problem of the agricultural sector in employing workforce. But another important point besides the gradual decline of the number of people employed in the agricultural sector is progressive aging of agricultural labor force in Iranian rural communities.

**Table (7): The average age of the population employed in agriculture and the whole country in the period 1966-2006**

Year Age group	1966		1976		1986		1996		2006	
	total	Agriculture	total	Agriculture	total	Agriculture	total	Agriculture	total	Agriculture
Average age (years)	33.55	34.3	34.3	37.6	35.1	40.4	35.8	40.5	35.7	40

Source: Ramezani, 2001: 218; and calculations of the General Population and Housing Census Data 1966-2006

The facts and figures of Table 7 show that the average age of workers in the agricultural sector during the years 1966, 1976, 1986, 1996 and 2006 was 34.3, 37.6, 40.4, 40.5, and 40 years, respectively. These figures indicate that the average age of workers in the agricultural sector has increased over the years. "Population aging in the agricultural sector has numerous effects; the most important negative consequences include conservatism and opposition to changes in production methods, Lack of innovation and development, decline of productivity, reduced fertility and continuity of aging in rural population, abandoning the limited agricultural lands, and economic security threat" (Taghdisi and Ahmadi Shadpourabadi, 2011). About the agricultural performance of Iran since the Islamic Revolution, Azkia (2005) states that:

"The agricultural performance has been generally poor since the Islamic Revolution, and the programs which were intended to improve productivity in agriculture failed to do this, and the increase in productivity did not increase in line with the increase in demand. The unscientific policy of supporting prices brought about problems for the development of agriculture. The most important problem of the agricultural policies after the Islamic Revolution was the absence of social goals in these policies. In other words, no policy was adopted to solve the rural social problems" (Azkia, 2005: 336).

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that since 68.96 percent of the employed population of Iran lived in rural areas in 1956, the employed population of the rural areas was distributed in a way that the largest percentage (74.3 percent) of the people employed were active in the agricultural sector. By examining the situation of the rural society of that time, we realize that the Iranian society, especially the rural society, went through the process of change at a slow pace. However, after the implementation of the first Developmental Program in Iran, significant changes, such as the nationalization of the oil industry in 1951, occurred in Iran, and the national government took up the reins of power. This historical change, along with the political changes occurring after the 1953 Coup, necessitated directing closer attention to the socio-political aspects of society. Thus the government had political motivations to play a more active role the rural areas and develop governmental organizations, and as a result, the rural and agricultural aspects of the Second Program were more emphasized. Nevertheless, in this period, the rural society of Iran remained almost untouched by the outcomes of the unrealistic programs of the development management in Iran, which was because of the insufficient influence of the central government in the rural areas as a result of the existence of the feudal system in the rural areas; therefore, in such a situation, the objectives of Development Programs were not achieved. After 1960s, especially

after the land reforms, the influence of the government in rural areas grew, and the adoption of the policy of planning from top to bottom provided a starting point for the considerable changes in the distribution of rural working population in major groups of activity to occur. After the 1961s, following these policies, the term “etatism”, i.e. the governmentalization of the villages, played an important part the description of the socio-economic and political structure of the rural society in the Iranian rural studies literature.

In the years 1956 to 2006, gradually the number of the employed population in the agricultural sector decreased and the number of people in the services and industrial sector increased. This does not mean that all the employed population in the agricultural sector, moved to the industrial and service sectors in the rural areas. In other words, in each period, a large percentage of the employed population in the agricultural sector became active in the industrial and urban service sectors. It should be noted that although in the developing countries the same trend can be identified, the major difference between the employed population in the industrial and service sectors in the developing countries and those working in the same sectors in the developed countries is that the owners of the industrial and service businesses in the developing countries are not professionally qualified and skilled, and consequently most jobs created in these sectors are unproductive. However, the new approaches in sustainable development, stress the importance of expert human resources.

With regard to the socio-economic situation of the Iranian society in this period, the following factors can be considered influential in the increase in the number of employed population in the agricultural sector, decrease in the degree self-sufficiency in the production of agricultural products, and increase in the import of agricultural products:

- Lack of realistic support for domestic industries and production on the part of the government, a trend existing in the production policies of Iran since Qajar Era.
- Low process of agricultural products, especially in the years 1961 to 1981. Because of the considerable increase in oil price, the government failed to pay attention to the agricultural sector; this increased the rate of emigration and consequently the degree of self-sufficiency of Iran in agriculture substantially decreased and on the other hand, this situation lead to the aging of workforce employed in rural areas.
- Slowness of the mechanization process and especially lack of self-sufficiency in creating the necessary technology caused the increase in the productivity of agricultural to be brought about at a low speed.

To understand the problems of agricultural sector in Iran, it is necessary to examine the population structure of Iran. By studying the structural changes in the population of Iran in the given period, we realize that the aging population of Iran has changed into a young population. The majority of the elderly who are active in the agricultural sector in villages lack the necessary education and consequently they neither possess the ability to implement new agricultural methods, nor have the tendency and motivation to do it. Therefore, it is recommended that strong emphasis should be put on training efficient specialist workforce, developing technological skills and creating productive capacity at the level of national and international institutions.

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