

Article

The Reality of Agriculture Organizations in Oued Souf

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Abstract : Agricultural organizations are considered one of the most important mechanisms in the development and sustainability of Saharan agriculture. From this perspective, this study addressed the problematic role of these organizations in OuedSouf. The aim is to highlight the importance of these organizations as a key element in building an integrated strategy to achieve sustainable desert development. The study sample included 120 agricultural investors randomly selected and distributed over five municipalities. The study found that the interviewed farmers do not see any role for these organizations in the agricultural sector. This translated into 99.17% of the farmers interviewed not belonging to any agricultural organization.

Keywords : Agricultural organizations, Saharan agriculture, Sustainable development, Agricultural Investments

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1. Introduction

The agricultural sector plays a prominent role in the economies of most countries. It contributes to the growth of gross domestic product, provides jobs, and thus reduces the problem of unemployment. It is one of the strategic sectors that play a vital role in ensuring sustainable agricultural development. Algeria, like other countries, is striving to implement economic strategies aimed at diversifying economic resources beyond the oil and gas sector. Considering the agriculture as a key sector that can contribute to economic diversification, the State has given it great attention in recent years. This sector has undergone a qualitative leap in recent years, especially in the desert areas, including the Oued Souf region, which has experienced a great transformation. The agricultural system used to be dominated by palm tree cultivation, or al-Ghout, but the latter experienced a crisis in the late 1980 due to the problem of the rising waters which submerged palm seedlings. These prompted farmers to consider moving to field agriculture and to establish a new agricultural system based on different mechanisms and methods.

The shift has produced a very important agricultural sector, in both food crops and livestock. This importance is not limited to the increase in the exploited area estimated at 100,000 hectares, but extends to the amount of production that is close to 20 million quintals, thus holding the national lead and achieving an estimated production value of more than 191 billion Dinar, with a growth rate of more than 7.47%, contributing by 6.4% to the GDP. In addition, it ranks second in both industrial crops - peanuts, tobacco, and dates. The sector has also a significant social impact with an estimated employment of more than 130,000 jobs, which covers 45% of the province's total labor force [1].

Although the El Oued province has achieved a great dynamism in the field of Saharan farming, this dynamism has been accompanied by a number of problems and obstacles, among which the absence of agricultural organizations in the Oued Souf region,

taking into consideration the fact that agricultural organizations are among the indicators of the social dimension of sustainable development (according to the IDEA Indicators of Sustainability of Agricultural Investments) [2]. So, the problem posed here is as follows:

What is the role of agricultural organizations in sustaining Saharan agriculture in the OuedSouf region?

This raises the following sub-questions:

- How effective are agricultural organizations in developing desert farming?
- What is the farmer's view of the role of agricultural organizations in the Oued Souf region province?
- What is the reason behind the absence of agricultural organizations in the region?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Approach

In order to complete the study and answer the central question posed by the problems and the sub-questions, we adopted the descriptive method, which is appropriate in providing the data, information and facts on the subject of the research.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis Tool:

We used an interview form to collect information, and created a pilot form in the first phase, which was then modified and finalized. It consisted of three main components: the first comprised general information about the farmer, the second, information regarding the investor, and the third covered sustainability indicators in their three dimensions: environmental, economic and social.

In data analysis, we used SPSS v19 in data processing, as well as ARC GIS mapping and study positioning after we determined the coordinates using a GPS device.

2.3 Sample and Search Community:

The field survey included 120 specimens distributed over five municipalities of Wadi Souf (Hassi Khalifa, Trefaoui, Ouarmas, Regueb, Tagzot), which rank first in terms of production, particularly for potato production, at 70% of the general production of the Oued Souf. The samples were randomly selected, and the field study took 27 days, 5 days to collect data from various agricultural actors, and then 22 days (2 × 11 days) to interview farmers on their farms.

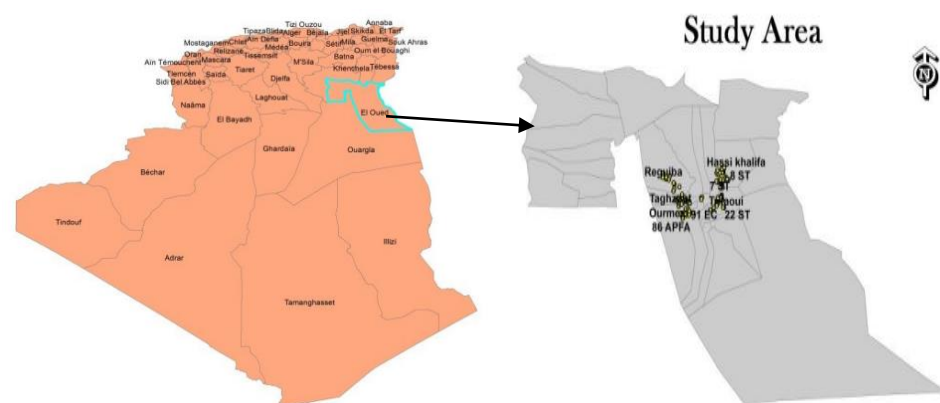


Figure 1. Study Area

In order to respond to the problem and achieve the objectives of the study, the latter was divided into the following components:

3. Agricultural organizations

Agricultural organizations are considered one of the most effective means to develop the agricultural sector. They are a key element in agricultural policy. Therefore, we will try in what follows to address the definition and role of professional organizations in agriculture. We will also address in this respect the most important agricultural organizations in Algeria.

3.1 *Identification and role of farming organizations*

3.1.1 Definition of farming organizations

There is not a single definition of what is a professional organization in agriculture. There are different viewpoints of thinkers and organizations, especially with the emergence of cooperative thought and the expansion of the activity of the cooperative movement [3]. So, we will attempt to present some of the most important of these definitions, the most prominent of which are:

Agricultural organizations are defined as structures designed as a means of facilitating or accelerating the integration of farmers into the market, i.e., intermediary structures between agricultural producers and other actors operating in their environment whether economic, institutional or political [2].

Farming organizations are also known as economic, agricultural, social and cultural institutions that work to provide various means of exploiting agricultural land, and the associated economic and social activities that aim to improve the standard of living, develop agricultural production methods, and provide all the necessary agricultural necessities for farmers at reasonable prices, with annual premiums commensurate with the yield of agricultural production [5].

It is also defined as a legal entity consisting of farmers of the same type of agricultural product, which may be a producer, association, cooperative or other legal form that provides for the sharing of profits or benefits among its members. [6]

They are also defined as groups of producers grouped together in more or less formal structures, to achieve a goal that cannot be reached through individual strategies [2].

Organizations are also defined as an economic institution in which a group of producers and consumers participate to achieve their economic and social goals which are not intended to be profitable as a final goal, but to serve their members economically and socially in order to raise their personal incomes which are reflected in their standard of living [8].

Based on previous definitions we can say that agricultural organizations are a group of farmers within a legal framework, not for profit, but for goals that cannot be attained through individual efforts.

3.1.2 Role of Agricultural Organizations in Agricultural Development

Agricultural organizations aim to reduce many of the problems that weigh on agricultural activity [2]. whose primary function is to represent farmers to ensure their participation in the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies and

development work, the most important of which can be illustrated below[4]. Regulate agricultural production of all types and stages, and perform the necessary actions to exploit the lands of the community and its members.

- The processing of materials, supplies and technical equipment needed by the Association for the improvement and increase of agricultural production.
- Ownership and leasing of agricultural machinery and means of transport to expand the use of agricultural machinery and to facilitate and improve the process of production.
- Marketing an organization's products and doing all that marketing requires: sorting, storing, drying, canning, transporting and selling them to the state or offering them in the local or foreign market as appropriate.
- Regulating the access of members to monetary and in-kind loans for production, marketing and consumption purposes, the manufacture of agricultural products, and the establishment of rural craft industries;
- Contribute to the control of pests and diseases of plants and animals, in cooperation with the competent state agencies.

The accomplishment of these tasks is based on three main functions, namely [11].

- Consultation: It is by conveying the farmers' perspective on their situation and that of the agricultural sector on the one hand, and on the other hand, by participating in the formulation of an agricultural policy and the choices to be made in rural development, and to exercise this function properly. Agricultural organizations should have the capacity to:
 - obtaining up-to-date information on the production channels and the different categories of farmers, and analyzing the micro and macro economic factors that determine their activities;
 - Formulating proposals with the participation of farmers to improve the conditions of different categories of farmers and production channels;
 - Communicating farmers' perspectives and suggestions at all levels to government and their partners in other professions.
 - Training farmers: The aim is to facilitate farmers' integration into markets, improve the quality of life in rural areas, and ensure a better balance between cities and the countryside.

Support for professional organization of farmers:

It is imperative for farmers to set up their own organizations, thus contributing to the professionalization of agriculture, as a basis for their participation in development and full integration into the market economy.

3.2 Agricultural organizations in Algeria

Professional organizations active in the agricultural sector in Algeria vary from one another. Some are active at the local level, some are active at the regional level, while others are active at the national level. They can also be of a common professional nature [12]. These professional organizations in the agricultural sector are:

3.2.1 Farmers Professional Associations

The Farmers Professional Association is the basic cell for farmers professional organization, in which natural or moral persons meet on a contractual basis and for a non-profit purpose [8], and the associations contribute and carefor.

-Extension of agricultural techniques;

-Raising awareness among farmers about the various fields related to agriculture.

3.2.2 Agricultural Union

The role of the farmers union is to defend the interests of the agricultural profession in the moral, social, economic and work domains. On the one hand, laborers and employees belonging to the same occupation, branch or sector of activity are entitled to form trade unions, in order to defend their material and moral interests [8]. At the national level, there are two unions active in the field: the National Union of Algerian Farmers (UNPA) and the Algerian Free Farmers Union (UFIA).

3.2.3 Chamber of Agriculture

Chambers of agriculture are defined as public institutions of an industrial and commercial character, subordinate to the ministry in charge of agriculture, characterized by a moral character and financial independence. It is considered a meeting place to represent agricultural business interests.

Its most important function is [8]:

- Regulating and developing forms of consultation, coordination and information among its participants and between them and between public institutions working in the sphere of production, financing, supply, distribution and transformation;
- The participants are represented to the public authorities in all fields relevant to the functions of the agricultural chamber;
- Defends the professional and social interests of its members;
- Contributes to the formulation of a national policy for the development, diversification and preparation of agricultural activities;
- Develop structures that will improve the production performance of farmers and help provide the services they need;
- The organization of markets, exhibitions and competitions and the dissemination of scientific, technical and economic media directed at its members.

3.2.4 Agricultural coopératives

The Agricultural Cooperative, which is based on the open membership, is a non-profit civil company that seeks to [8]:

- Accomplish and facilitate production, conversion, purchase or marketing.
- reduce the cost and sales price of some products and services to the benefit of their members and through their joint efforts.
- improves the quality of the products they offer their members and the ones they produce.

3.2.5 Joint Agricultural Professional Council

The professional councils are advisory bodies in the form of professional associations on special economic, technical, and legal issues. They are composed of farmers and

economic operators involved in agricultural activities of interest to the concerned branches, and representatives of the agricultural chamber. Open to individual farmers (not taking into account professional associations. It is based on the sum of all actors around a single agricultural product or on the product group or subdivision [8].

4. The reality of farming organizations in the Oued Souf

Those who follow the situation of the agricultural sector in the Souf will realize the great attention paid by the state to this sector, given the great agricultural dynamic witnessed in the region, through the development of the agricultural area of crops and the development of the volume and diversity of production [10].

4.1 Location

The Oued Souf is a known Algerian province consisting of the two parts :the OuedSouf and Oued Rig, which are different in some customs and traditions, and in the nature of their land, and at the time in their construction. The Oued Souf is located in the northeast of the Algerian south [11].

In the greater North-east Irq, bordered to the North by Khenchela, to the Northeast by Tebessa, and to the NorthWest by Djelfa. The South and the West are bordered by the province of Ouargla [12].

4.2 Agricultural organizations in Oued Souf

Agricultural organizations in the Oued Soufregion are active in many areas of the agricultural sector. These organizations are divided into the Directorate of Agricultural Interests of the Oued Souf[13].

- Agricultural cooperatives: Ten cooperatives are organized representing the following specializations (palm, grain, dry beans, multi-service, CASCI).
- Professional associations: It is composed of 78 professional associations of farmers in an accredited framework throughout the province, and is active in the following specialties: grains, palm trees, potatoes, poultry, fruit trees, palm trees, aquaculture, hunting, farming machinery, red meat, multi-service).
- Professional Councils: The formation of 11 professional councils with the following competencies:

Province Professional Councils: 9 Councils represented in the following branches (dates, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, garlic, red meat, poultry, grains, olives, milk)

Regional Professional Councils: 20 Councils represented in the following branches (dates-onions and garlic).

5. Results & discussion

Based on the problem of the study and the field study that we conducted, and based on measuring a set of indicators showing the presence of a culture of belonging and the awareness of the importance of farmers' organizations in the region and their role in the development of agriculture, the latter as an indicator of sustainable development.

These indicators are:

5.1 Farmer's Legal Status

Based on the analysis of the data of Table 1 and Figure number relating to the legal status of agricultural investments, it is clear that most agricultural investments are investments whose owners do not have documents proving their legal status (37.16%).

Table 1. Farmer's Legal Status

Total	Farmer's Legal Status							Total
	Location	Sans Titre	Arch	Melk Aourfi	Melk Titre	Concession EC	APFA	
Hassi khalifa	1	11	0	8	0	1	11	32
Trifaoui	0	4	0	3	1	5	7	20
Reguiba	0	18	0	2	0	1	0	21
Taghzout	0	12	0	0	0	1	6	19
Ourmas	0	2	1	0	0	6	19	28
120	1	47	1	13	1	14	43	Total
100	0.83	37.16	0.83	10.83	0.8	11.66	35.83	%

Source: Field study

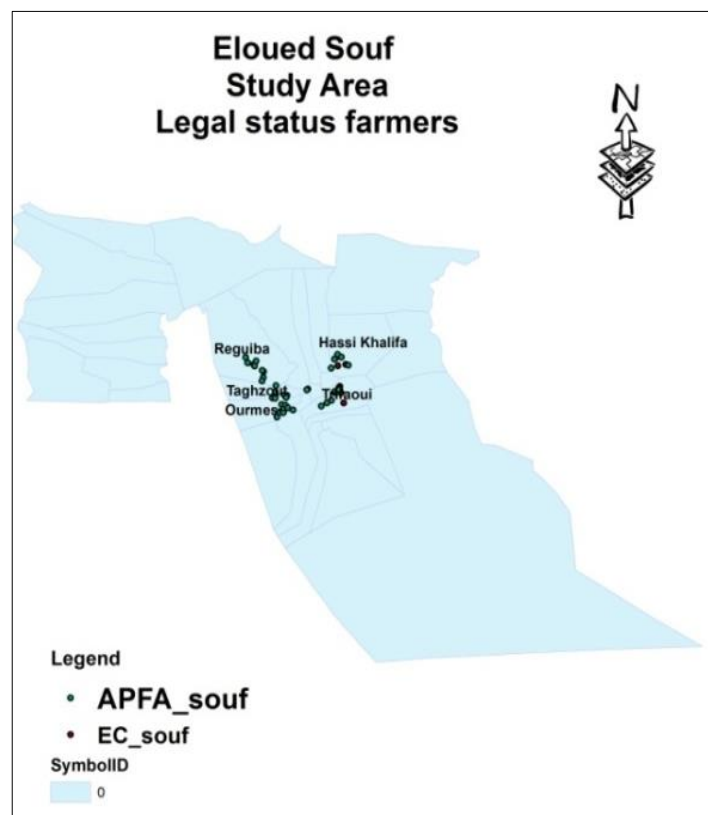


Figure 3. The legal status of farmers

5.2 The relationship between the age of farmers and the educational level and their experience of farming

The Table 2 show that 64 farmers between 10 and 20 years of experience in the field of farming are between 31 and 41 years of age, of whom 17 have an elementary education. Thirty-one farmers have less than ten years of experience, and their ages range between 31 and 41, of which 11 farmers have elementary school education. We also find that 23 farmers with more experience are in the 11-20 age group, of which 9 have primary education. While 19 farmers with more than 21 years of experience have an elementary education, their ages are restricted to the 31-41 age group.

We conclude from the results that the predominant age group for farmers is 31-41 years old, and the predominant education level in this group is primary.

Table 2. A double table between the age of farmers and the level of education

experience in agriculture			Age				Total
			20-30	31-41	42-52	+53	
1-10 years	Education Level	No schooling	2	0	0	2	3
		primary	2	11	5	2	18
		secondary	1	3	1	1	6
		university	0	4	0	0	4
		Total	5	18	6	5	31
10-20 years	Education Level	No schooling	0	0	2	2	4
		primary	3	17	10	4	34
		secondary	0	5	8	0	13
		university	6	28	23	7	64
		Total	6	28	23	7	64
+20 years	Education Level	No schooling	1	0	0	1	2
		primary	3	9	6	1	19
		secondary	0	2	0	0	2
		university	0	1	1	0	2
		Total	3	12	7	1	25
Total	Education Level	No schooling	0	0	2	2	4
		primary	7	37	21	9	74
		secondary	1	10	9	1	21
		university	3	11	4	1	19
		Total	11	58	36	13	118

Source : Field study

5.3 Geographical Affiliation of Farmers

Based on chart 1, it is clear that the majority of the farmers interviewed are from the Wadi Souf region, 99.17% due to the difficult nature of the area that does not attract farmers from outside the region. Furthermore, the Sufi farmer has an ability to adapt to the natural conditions of the area.

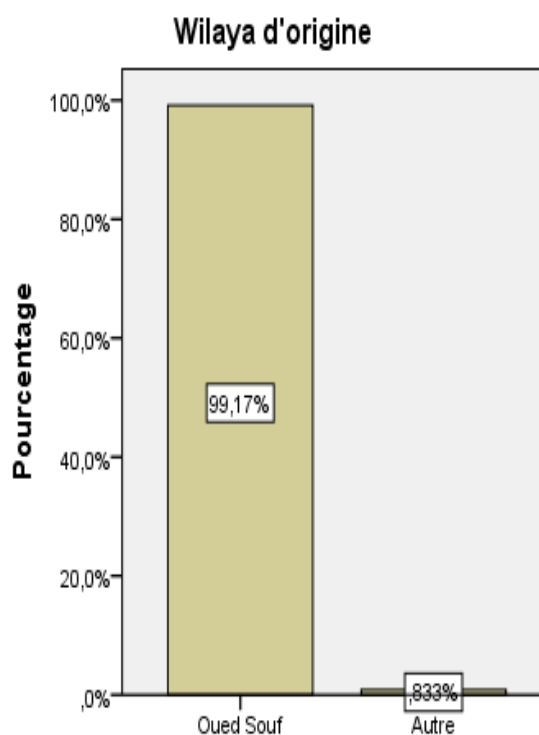


Figure 4. Geographical Affiliation of Farmers

5.4. Farmers Professional Activity Outside Agriculture

The data obtained in Table 1 show that 76.7% of the farmers surveyed do not engage in any activity outside farming, while 23.3% are engaged in other professional activities outside the farming sector, and Table 3 shows their distribution among the professional sectors, in the following order: trade, freelance work, transport, management.

We point out that 23.3% is a significant percentage, which explains why other professional groups choose to pursue farming based on investment, the return on which is guaranteed.

Table 3. Farmer Professional Activity Outside Farming

	Yes		No
Performing another professional task	28	Trading	14
		Administration	1
		free businesses	7
		Transport	5
		Other	1
		23.3	76.7

Source : Field study

5.5. Farmers belong to farmers' organizations

According to Figure 1, the majority of the farmers interviewed do not belong to any farmers' organization at the level of the province (99%). This is due, from the farmers' perspective to the following reasons: 66.67% consider that there are no farmers' organizations active in the region, while 29.17% believe that there is no need to join any of these organizations, and the remaining 4.17% do not belong to any farmers' organization without a specific reason being mentioned.

From the above findings, we can conclude that the reasons why farmers do not join agricultural organizations are as follows:

- The lack of trust of the farmers in any of the activities of these organizations, also these organizations do not stem from the farmers and therefore do not represent them because they are administrative in nature and do not serve their interests and do not look forward to their requirements;
- The low level of education of the farmers interviewed explains the poor culture of their membership in farming organizations;
- The legal status of agricultural investments also affects farmers' lack of belonging to any of the organizations, as we previously mentioned that 47% of the farmers interviewed do not have legal documents proving their legal status, which prevents them from practicing any activity within a legal framework.

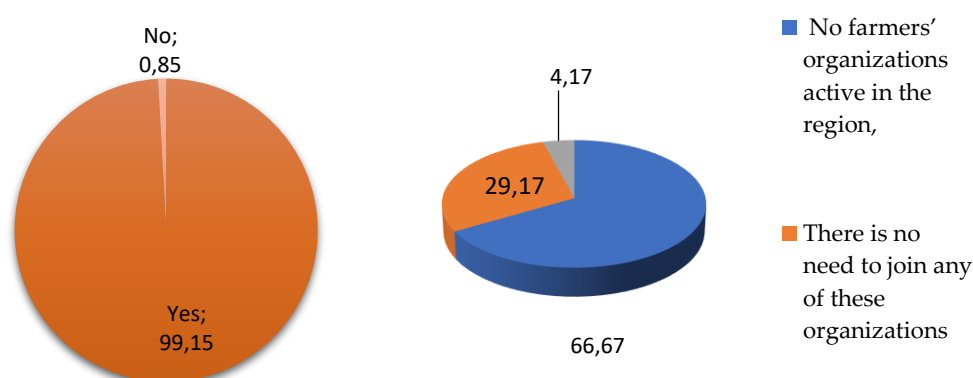


Figure 5. Farmers Membership in Agricultural Organizations

6. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the indicators and the field study, a set of conclusions can be drawn:

On the second sub-question, regarding the farmers' perspective on the role of agricultural organizations in Oued Souf, the study found that the farmers interviewed did not see any important role for these organizations in the agricultural sector. This shows in the 99.17% of the respondents not belonging to any agricultural organization, which can be attributed to the following reasons:

- absence of a culture of farmers' organizations among Sufi farmers;
- legal status of agricultural investments;
- low educational level of farmers;
- farmers' engagement in professional activity outside the farming sector;
- lack of awareness of the important role of agricultural organizations.

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

- conducting awareness campaigns for farmers with the aim of encouraging them to identify agricultural organizations, which have a prominent role in the development of the sector.
- freeing agricultural organizations from any ideology or political orientation that hinders the objectives of the development of the agricultural sector.
- providing training courses to farmers on how to setting up farming organizations, such as farmers' associations, should be undertaken.

- organizing forums, seminars, and scientific courses to familiarize people with the importance of agricultural organizations and spread their culture among farmers.
- allowing these organization to be fully governed by their members without the influence of the donor State or institutions on the decision-making of the members

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