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**The Contribution of Women to the Living Standard in  
Lebanese Farming Systems**

**- a Case Study of Druze Families in the Chouf Mountains**

**M.Sc. Thesis**

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## 5. Conclusion

The case study allowed for some indications about the role of Druze women as farmers and resource managers and their contribution to the living standard of their families. A profound testing of the underlying hypotheses would require representative data on all members of this population group and a substantially larger framework of research. Thus, it was neither intended nor achievable in the current study.

The women of all three groups contribute significantly to the living standards of their families- either with remunerated off-or on-farm work (group 1 and 2), or by non remunerated labour or labour assistance (group3). During the high season (June-October), women work even longer hours than the men and accomplish in many cases even a triple role: off- farm and on-farm work as well as household responsibilities.

Households where women contribute with remunerated off- or on-farm activities are economically better off. The calculation of the per capita household income of the groups showed that households of group 3 earn around 40% more than those of group 1 and 2. Furthermore, only 47% of these households are living on a yearly per capita income of less than 2,000,000 LP (63% of these are in the 1,500,000-20,000,000 LP income range) as compared to 71% of group 1 and 83% of group 2. Furthermore, as off-farm income comprises the biggest share of the total household income, most farming systems could not survive without it.

Women of group 3 are on average more involved in the decision-making over the spending of the income and concerning other family decisions. This implies that due to their economic contribution, their status within the family is higher and the partners are more equal.

Female-headed households earn around 40% less than the households of group 2 but no significant difference was found compared to the households of group 2. Nevertheless, 29% live in abject poverty on less than 1,000,000 LP per capita/ year and another 43% of the female-headed households live below the poverty line on less than 1,500,000 LP.

The women of group 1 felt on average more impaired by the respective selected factors that constrain women farmers than the women of the other groups. This is because they have to accomplish most of the daily household and farm responsibilities by themselves. Time spend in all these activities depends on the following: size of the household, size of the farm, cropping pattern, geographical characteristics, age and health status of the women and income level of the family.

The two main limiting factors of the region that hinder men and women in their productivity were found to be lack of water and the lack of marketing possibilities. High transport costs to storage facilities as well as high storage costs further decrease the productivity of the faming systems With altogether 60% of the questioned households living below the poverty line cash is also a major problem.

The findings of the survey show most of all that the women contribute greatly to the living standard of the families. However, it also shows that further research on the topic is still needed in order to raise awareness of gender equality and to better understand women's constraints and issues as to improve their efficiency. For example providing extension and training programmes that match women's needs and circumstances.