Multiple Cropping in Some Countries of the Middle East

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Multiple cropping is a third dimension (the other two dimensions being increasing yield per crop and increasing area of arable land) that many underdeveloped countries of the tropical and subtropical climates have utilized to increase food production in response to high increases in population. This especially was the case of Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean coast of the Middle East. In other parts of the Middle East and where the climate is temperate, arid, or semiarid multiple cropping has been practiced only to a small extent. The countries that will be covered in this report are Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

**MULTIPLE CROPPING—AN ANCIENT PRACTICE**

Double cropping has a long history in the Middle East. In Egypt and Babylon, as reported by Dalrymple (1971), the development of double cropping closely paralleled the growth of irrigation systems. It is not certain when double cropping began in Babylon, but one estimate places the beginning of irrigation at 4,000 to 6,000 years ago (Dalrymple, 1971). Around 77 AD, Pliny observed that in Babylon, “They cut the blade twice, then let the cattle pasture on it a third time.” During the Islamic conquest of Iran from the 7th to the 11th century, the arable plains of Dasht Run produced four crops a year under irrigation.

In Egypt it is also not clear when double cropping began. Irrigation is thought to have originated as early as 3000 to 5000 BC. However, there is no evidence of double cropping beginning that early. Compertz (cited by Dalrymple, 1971) reported that about 300 BC a letter was written by Appollonius to a farm manager in Memphis stating, “The king has ordered us to sow the land twice. As soon as you gather the crops, irrigate the soil im-

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1 Contribution from the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, American University of Beirut, Journal Number 460. Financed partially by Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research.

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