



THE OBSTACLES FACING THE WORK OF COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SERVICE OF FARMERS AND DEVELOPING THEIR AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN BABYLON PROVINCE, IRAQ

Hassan Hamid Al-Shammari and Mithal A.S. Al-Mashhadani

College of Agricultural Engineering Sciences, University of Baghdad, Iraq

Abstract

The study aimed to identify the obstacles facing the work of Cooperative agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities in Babylon province, and to achieve the goal of the research, a questionnaire was prepared consist of four axes for the obstacles facing the work of Cooperative agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities, which included 24 paragraphs distributed on the four axes (legislative, technical, administrative, financial), with the rate of (6, 6, 9, 3 paragraphs), respectively. It was presented on the respondents with a triple importance scale (important, somewhat important, unimportant), and the following weights (1, 2, 3) were determined to it, respectively. Data were collected from the 106 respondents from members of the administrative foundations for the cooperative agricultural organizations by a personal interview method. The results of the study concluded that all the respondents confirmed the paragraph (weak interest by the role of cooperative agricultural organizations from the government departments and institutions) where this obstacle is considered the key and the entrance to the other obstacles that have emerged, They reported 24 obstacles distributed on four axes, ranging in importance from 2.37 to 2.58 degrees with an average significance of 2.49 degrees, The researchers recommend that government institutions should develop appropriate solutions to the obstacles facing the Cooperative agricultural organizations in order to be able to perform their hoped roles in achieving agricultural development and serve the peasants belonging to them and meet their social and economic needs.

Keywords : Cooperative agricultural organizations, agricultural activities, Babylon province

Introduction

Agriculture in the world today faces a wide range of risks and challenges. The most important of which is the provision of food security, increasing productivity and production to meet the large and growing demand for agricultural and food products as a result of the growing population, facing the environmental degradation, the shortage of natural resources, non-renewal it and sustainability, Unprecedented climate change, As well as the topographic, social, economic and political nature of each country, In order to face these risks and challenges in the field, they are conducting through the fields of farmers, thus the farmers are facing these challenges in the field, so it is necessary to meet the need of these farmers from the services to enable them to exercise their agricultural activity hard and to achieve an effective response to these challenges, This is done only through the existence of agricultural organizations that have the ability to organize farmers and group them into a system linked to specific goals that are aware of their problems and meet their aspirations through applying the participatory approach (FAO, 2001), through which the various administrative and executive bodies can identify the problems and desires and real potential of the sons of the countryside, It also works on facilitating its functions with regard to the services that wish to provide them by providing agricultural inputs, regulating the market, etc. (Bayoumi, 2004). As well as facilitate the management of agricultural technologies and help in the transfer of agricultural systems among the various peasant families and encourage them to use simple agricultural practices, which help to increase agricultural incomes, thus improve the rural standard of living (Swanson, 2014). It plays a crucial role in sustainable agricultural development by supporting development issues, particularly in organic farming systems, awareness programs and marketing processes (Siddaraju, 2011). Cooperative agricultural organizations have promised important means of

raising the economic and social level of the rural population, especially small farmers, who often face many problems, such as low income resulting from low production efficiency, high costs, competition with major investors and Weak access to information, which is one of the basics of promoting agricultural work, As well as limited guidance programs (Badir, 2013). In order to facing these problems, the agricultural sector requires a broad and growing interest in cooperative agricultural organizations by expanding its bases and spread, developing its technical and financial capabilities and increasing its participation and contribution in the fields of sustainable agricultural development and food security, This is what the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) invited to it (United Nations, 2015). As well as its closeness to people and dealing with them on the basis of public participation, it has been considered a new trend in developing countries (Adly, 2005). In addition, the organization of farmers into groups would increase the efficiency and effectiveness for the supplying process of the extension and advisory services for all types of farmers (Stefanie Kaegi, 2015). The Group of 20 states that India is one of the fastest growing countries in the production, development, and diversification of agricultural products and improving specialization in the production of agricultural commodities and the extent to which farmers benefit from it. One of the reasons for this is their organization in cooperative agricultural organizations, In China, there are about 140,000 agricultural organizations created within the Agricultural Extension and applying the Decentralization which relates directly to technical and agricultural extension stations (Swanson, 2014). In Bolivia, the responsibility for providing extension services has been fully delegated to the Cooperative agricultural organizations within the framework of its agricultural extension system (Al-Taie, 2014). In Iraq, where the country faces major agricultural challenges, which may extend for decades to achieve food security, self-sufficiency, meeting requirements,

and promoting all components of society, it is very important that these organizations have an effective role to facing these challenges. The history of these organizations is associated with the history of the emergence of the Iraqi state, and that all the governments that came to power in Iraq gave clear importance through the legislation of the laws governing their work, These organizations became having an organizational and legislative structure and numerous laws, For example, Law No. 30 of 1958 forced the benefited farmers from agrarian reform to join these organizations and associating it with the Cooperation Department (Shaker, 1980). The Cooperative agricultural organizations in Iraq was established since the 1950s, and the General Federation of Cooperative agricultural organizations (the former Agricultural Cooperative Union) in Iraq has been operating according to a broad national plan since its inception in 1970 (Abboud, 2015: Internet). During the 1980s and 1990s, the trends of these organizations began to take on a political character according to the requirements of the time period. However, these organizations have accumulated experience in the agricultural field. The farmers are the field commanders for the agricultural process. However, lately, their work has become marginal and has suffered from stagnation, especially after the enactment of Law 56 and the instructions No. 1 of 2002, fortified by the Constitution in accordance with a paragraph 126 of 2005, which stipulates on giving the cooperative agricultural organizations independence in supervision, management, and guidance by making the General Federation of Cooperative Agricultural organizations the main Federation in supervising, directing and monitoring its work and all matters relating to its affairs and Disengaging its connection with the Ministry of Agriculture (Iraqi laws and legislation, the Internet), thus it lost the technical and financial support which it enjoyed, where the General Federation of Agricultural Cooperative organizations differs from other federations, organizations and trade unions. It is productive within the cooperative economic system. It is one of the branches of the non-governmental agricultural economy (the General Union of Agricultural organizations in Iraq, 2017). Thus, the production of the cooperative sector in Iraq is a small percentage does not exceed 0.003% of total local production (Jawda, 2006). The Ministry of Agriculture and within its strategic plan for the years 2015-2025, several paragraphs were included, such as studying the experience of the Cooperative beholder and cooperative theory and benefiting from its positive aspects, and the amendment of the Cooperative Agricultural organizations Law to allowing by establishing the specialized agricultural cooperatives for agricultural services such as Mechanized agriculture, agricultural marketing, As well as the orientation towards decentralization in the administrative work in Iraq in general and agro-services in particular and work to increase the participation of farmers and their organizations in the planning and implementation of agricultural plans, programs and projects (Ministry of Agriculture / Department of Planning and Follow-up, 2015). One of the most important objectives of the strategic plan of the NGO directorate in Iraq is to achieve the institutional partnership between the governmental sector and non-governmental organizations and to provide a political and legislative environment that encourages effective partnership in the planning, implementation, monitoring and follow-up processes (NGO Directorate, 2013). However, the cooperative agricultural

organizations remained limited in Iraq and did not rise to the level of ambition in the development of the reality of the agricultural sector, due to the many constraints that have been faced, including lack of interest and government support for them, and the lack of administrative competencies and other obstacles (Nashur, 2016), As well as the lack of sources of funding necessary for cooperative agricultural organizations to conducting the tasks required from them in the forefront of those problems and obstacles facing their work and the roles that should be conducting, including marketing role (Al-Khafaji, 2018). Therefore, the establishment of cooperative agricultural organizations and the selection of their leaders are considered the basis in the reconstruction and dissemination of cooperative agricultural organizations and developing it (Al-Taei, 2005). In order to ensure the success of the work of the cooperative agricultural organizations working in accordance with the economic fundamentals, the Ministry of Agriculture and its affiliated institutions are required to conducting pilot campaigns aimed at raising the awareness of farmers and investors about the importance of these organizations at the level of the individual and society (Al-Aqidi, 2005: Al-Sabah Newspaper). Therefore, in light of the above directions, the research comes to answer the following questions:

What are the obstacles facing the work of agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities?

The importance of research: The importance of research stems from the importance of the role that can be played by cooperative agricultural organizations by contributing to the activation of the role of the non-governmental agricultural sector, which is the development of the rural economy in particular and then the national economy in general by increasing agricultural production both vegetative and animal, and benefit from the experiences of other countries in this area to restore these institutions their role as one of the frameworks of development, and propose development policies based on the field and scientific evidence, as well as enrich the library of scientific research, where this research is recent and important studies in this field. The aim of the research: Identifying the obstacles facing the work of the cooperatives agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities (legislative, technical, administrative, financial).

Research hypothesis:

- 1- Cooperative agricultural organizations shall play an active role in developing the agricultural sector in Iraq if the significant decline that has occurred is dealt with.
- 2- There are many obstacles facing the work of Cooperative agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities in Babylon province.

Materials and Methods

The descriptive approach, which is considered the appropriate method to obtain accurate information from the social reality about the subjected Phenomenon for research, where It is possible to identify the relationships between the variables that effect on the subjected phenomenon and predicting it (Al-Jadri, 2018).

- 1) **Research community:** of the administrative foundations for the cooperative agricultural organizations, including:

- A- The administrative foundations for the General Federation of Cooperative Agricultural organizations in Iraq, their number is (13 members).
- B- The administrative foundations for the local Federation of Cooperative Agricultural organizations in Babylon province, their number is (9 members).
- C- The administrative foundations for the Sub-Unions (executive offices) for the Cooperative Agricultural organizations in the center and the districts of Babylon province and their number is 35 members divided into 5 offices.
- D- Administrative foundations for Cooperative Agricultural organizations in the center, districts, and villages of Babylon province and their number is 385 members distributed to 55 agricultural organizations.
- 2) The sample of Research: A sample was selected in a Stratified Random Sampling method with the percentage of 12% of the Cooperative Agricultural organizations in the center, districts, and villages of Babylon province, with the rate of 7 organizations. The sample included all members of the administrative foundations for these organizations with a rate of 49 respondents.
- 3) The aims of the research: A preliminary scheme was prepared to collect information and data related to the obstacles facing the work of the Cooperative Agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities to fit the aims of the current research and methodology (Al-Jadri, 2018). The process of designing the preliminary scheme for the obstacles facing the work of the Cooperative Agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities has gone through the following stages:
- A) In the light of a number of sources related to the work of the cooperative agricultural organizations, a scheme was prepared for the obstacles facing the work of the Cooperative Agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities, which consisted of 24 paragraphs divided into four axes: legislative, technical, administrative, financial.
- B) After identifying the axes and the formulation of the paragraphs, in its initial form, it was presented on 15 arbitrators with expertise and experience in the fields of agricultural extension and agricultural economics and cooperative agricultural organizations, to measure the face validity and the Content Validity to judge on the validity of what mentioned above to measure what is designed for measurement, to benefit from the arbitrators' observation and suggestions in the suitability of the paragraphs to the research axes, in terms of integrity of expression, non-overlap and repetition between the paragraphs, the clarity of the paragraphs and their scientific accuracy, as well as to suggest what they deem appropriate, in the case of disagreement on it, By deleting or adding other paragraphs to exit the final form of the questionnaire before being presented to the respondents, so a triple approval runway was used (approval, approval with modification, Non-approval), The following weights were determined (0, 1,

2), respectively, it was asked the experts to place a sign) in the place that expresses their approval to the axes and paragraphs, The opinions of the experts and the records of their answers were collected during the period between (1/11/2018 – 1/9/2018) and the modifications were conducted on the axes and some paragraphs, where they have been rearranged and modified based on the observations and proposals that have been agreed by 75% and more of the arbitrators. The means degrees of the approvals of the experts on the components of the scheme was calculated as the initial form. The general mean for the percentage of experts' approval on the axes and paragraphs of the scheme amounted to 87.6% from the experts' opinions.

C) Data collection

A questionnaire was prepared for the members of the administrative foundations of the cooperative agricultural organizations, which consisted of the paragraphs of the plan for the obstacles facing the work of the cooperative agricultural organizations according to a triple importance scale (important, somewhat important, unimportant). The data were collected from the 106 respondents by the method of a personal interview with them within the period between (25/11 / 2018 - 20 / 2/2019) by the questionnaires that were prepared for this purpose.

Results and Discussion

The obstacles facing the work of Cooperative agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities:

For the purpose of identifying the obstacles facing the work of the agricultural organizations, the paragraphs of the scale of the obstacles were presented which amounted 24 paragraphs on the members of the administrative foundations in question according to a triple importance scale (important, somewhat important, unimportant), and weights were given (3, 2, 1), respectively. Therefore, the highest grade for the scale amounted to 72 degrees and the lowest grade for the scale amounted to 24 degrees. The weighted mean and the percentage weight for each paragraph of the scales were calculated. The paragraphs were arranged in descending order according to the degree of importance to the respondents and according to the weighted mean value of each paragraph.

The aim of the research: To identify the obstacles facing the work of Cooperative agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities from the point view of the members of the administrative foundations of cooperatives agricultural organizations, represented by the following:

- 1- Presenting, analyzing and discussing the member's opinions of the administrative foundations for the cooperative agricultural organizations concerned about the obstacles facing the work of Cooperative agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities, This area includes four axes of obstacles (administrative, legislative, financial, technical). For the purpose of analyzing these axes, the weighted means and the percentage weight of each axis were extracted as shown in the following table:

Table: means and percentage weight of obstacles facing the work of Cooperative agricultural organizations in the service of farmers and developing their agricultural activities

The field	Sequencing as important	Axis	The average weighed means	The average of the percentage weight
The obstacles facing the work of Cooperative agricultural organizations	1	administrative	2.58	85.99
	2	legislative	2.56	85.72
	3	financial	2.45	81.88
	4	technical	2.37	80.60
General average			2.49	83.54

Administrative Obstacles

The results of the research showed that the members of the administrative foundations in the cooperative agricultural organizations (respondents) mentioned the existence of nine administrative obstacles facing the work of agricultural cooperatives, The average values of these obstacles ranged

from 2.14 to 2.92 degrees, with a percentage weight ranged between (71.33 - 97.33%), with an average amounted to (2.58 degrees), according to an importance scale ranging from 1-3 degrees, This average shows that the administrative obstacles at an important level, as shown in the following table:

Table: Distribution of respondents according to their views on the axis of administrative obstacles

Order	Administrative obstacles	Important	Somewhat important	unimportant	Weighted mean	The average of the percentage weight
1	Weak interest in the role of cooperative agricultural organizations by government departments and institutions.	98	8	0	2.92	97.33
2	Lack of administrative link with the government apparatus that provides support and advice to cooperative agricultural organizations.	93	11	2	2.85	95
3	Lack of cooperative agricultural organizations to the administrative staff, which directs the organizations and conduct their work.	87	19	0	2.82	94
4	The weakness of the role of Mass media in supporting cooperative agricultural organizations.	80	26	0	2.75	91.66
5	Low level of cooperative awareness of many of the farmers of the importance of cooperative work and cooperative agricultural organizations.	56	50	0	2.52	84
6	Absence and non-continuation of members of agricultural organizations cooperative meetings of the General foundations.	58	40	8	2.47	82.33
7	Lack of a database on cooperative agricultural organizations, which makes it difficult to identify the real potential.	66	16	24	2.39	79.66
8	The weakness of the ability of cooperative agricultural organizations to keep abreast of the progress achieved by cooperative societies in developed countries.	66	13	27	2.36	78.66
9	Lack of criteria for assessing the social performance of cooperative agricultural organizations.	42	37	27	2.14	71.33
Average answers of respondents					2.58	85.99

In the table above, the most respondents confirmed on the paragraph (Weak interest in the role of cooperative agricultural organizations by government departments and institutions.) which has obtained the highest average importance amounted to (2.92) degree and a percentage weight amounted to (97.33). This may be attributed to the lacking awareness of government institutions by the importance of the roles that can be played by the agricultural organizations in the development of agricultural and rural,

thus does not give them the appropriate attention and coordination with them in the relevant issues, and the weakness of attention will be reflected on their roles and expected results and their importance in the agricultural sector and A major reason for the survival of these organizations at a level of poor or limited performance. The paragraphs of (Lack of criteria for assessing the social performance of cooperative agricultural organizations) came in the last order among the administrative obstacles facing

the work of the agricultural organizations with average importance amounted to (2.14 degree) and a percentage weight amounted to (71.33). This may also be attributed to the first obstacle, which is characterized by a Weak interest in the role of cooperative agricultural organizations by government departments and institutions, where the Weak of interest make the government institutions are not interested in developing criteria that assess the social performance for these organizations, thus the process of evaluation absent from them, which contributes to their inability to perform their role in the development of the agricultural sector.

Legislative obstacles

The results of the research showed that the members of the administrative foundations in the cooperative agricultural organizations (respondents) mentioned the existence of six Legislative obstacles facing the work of agricultural cooperatives, The average values of these obstacles ranged from 2.40 to 2.97 degrees, with a percentage weight ranged between (80-99%), with an average amounted to (2.56 degrees), according to an importance scale ranging from 1-3 degrees, This average shows that the Legislative obstacles at an important level, as shown in the following table:

Table : Distribution of respondents according to their views on the axis of Legislative obstacles

Order	Legislative obstacles	Important	Somewhat important	unimportant	Weighted mean	The average of the percentage weight
1	The absence of a framework for applying the law of cooperative agricultural organizations in connection with coordination between them and the relevant governmental institutions.	103	3	0	2.97	99
2	Inadequate legislation of changes in the cooperative and agricultural movement.	66	40	0	2.62	87.33
3	The failure to link cooperative agricultural organizations to economic reform policies, which limits their ability to contribute effectively to the agricultural development process.	77	11	18	2.55	85
4	The authority of the personal and influential stakeholders on the cooperative agricultural organizations, which affects the performance of their basic duties.	69	16	21	2.45	81.66
5	The unionist feeling of some of the leaders and members of the cooperative agricultural organizations that their immigrants are limited to defending the rights of peasants only.	66	21	19	2.44	81.33
6	Political interference in the work of cooperative agricultural organizations, which in some cases leads to deviation from the course of its cooperative work.	64	21	21	2.40	80
Average answers of respondents					2.56	85.72

In the table above, the most respondents confirmed on the paragraph (The absence of a framework for applying the law of cooperative agricultural organizations in connection with coordination between them and the relevant governmental institutions.) which has obtained the highest average importance amounted to (2.97) degree and a percentage weight amounted to (99). This may be attributed to the fact that the agricultural organizations are still operating according to Law No. 56 and Instructions No. 1 of 2002, which made them independent organizations in everything related to their affairs, which gave freedom to governmental institutions in coordination or not with the agricultural organizations which are no longer linked to them as in the past. This is considered an important reason for the lack of interest in cooperative agricultural organizations and placing them in the place that should be in the formulation of agricultural policies, strategies, and programs, thus the limited roles of these organizations and non-development of these roles. This legislation was enacted prior to the fundamental change in Iraq in 2003. The roles were concentrated in the field of mobilization and mobilization of the military-political nature rather than focusing on

developing the roles of these organizations in the field of serving the farmers and developing their agricultural activities. where the legislation is considered now the framework for determining the roles and the starting to more effective roles and adaptation to the stage and conditions experienced by farmers and the agricultural sector and the country. We conclude from this: The departments of the agricultural organizations understand the importance of the existence of appropriate legislation as a legal framework for the work of these organizations and determining their place in sustainable agricultural development and the institutional agricultural organizations should coordinate with them. As for the paragraphs of (Political interference in the work of cooperative agricultural organizations, which in some cases leads to deviation from the course of its cooperative work) came in the last order among the Legislative obstacles facing the work of the agricultural organizations with average importance amounted to (2.40 degree) and a percentage weight amounted to (80). This may be attributed to the awareness of the administrations of these organizations that the political role which was exercised in the past did not achieve the desired results and therefore their departments

did not allow the political interventions in the work of agricultural organizations and It is the result of the past experience of these organizations.

Financial obstacles

The results of the research showed that the members of the administrative foundations in the cooperative agricultural organizations (respondents) mentioned the existence of three

Financial obstacles facing the work of agricultural cooperatives, The average values of these obstacles ranged from 2.35 to 3 degrees, with a percentage weight ranged between (81.88-100%), with an average amounted to (2.58 degrees) according to an importance scale ranging from 1-3 degrees, This average shows that the Financial obstacles at an important level, as shown in the following table:

Table: Distribution of respondents according to their views on the axis of Financial obstacles

Order	Financial obstacles	Important	Somewhat important	unimportant	Weighted mean	The average of the percentage weight
1	Lack of required self-financing for cooperative agricultural organizations due to the low value of members' contribution and the limited allocations granted to them.	106	0	0	3	100
2	The traders and the intrusion of moneylenders on the work of agricultural organizations.	64	16	26	2.35	78.33
3	Charges and taxes on the inputs of cooperative agricultural organizations.	48	13	45	2.02	67.33
Average answers of respondents					2.45	81.88

In the table above, most respondents confirmed on the paragraph (Lack of required self-financing for cooperative agricultural organizations due to the low value of members' contribution and the limited allocations granted to them). This weak funding may be attributed to:

- 1- Independence of these organizations from agricultural institutions and therefore does not receive government financial support in accordance with the law in force
- 2- The departments mentioned that among the administrative obstacles to these organizations is the lack of ownership of the administrative staff, which directs the organizations and conducting their work and this is reflected in the weakness of finding outlets that can find financial sources of such organizations as the establishment of marketing outlets for member products with a profit margin or open centers for supplying raw

materials used in the agricultural production process (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) with a profit margin that can contribute to raising the capacity of agricultural organizations to carry out their hoped-for roles in agricultural development.

Technical obstacles

The results of the research showed that the members of the administrative foundations in the cooperative agricultural organizations (respondents) mentioned the existence of six Technical obstacles facing the work of agricultural cooperatives, The average values of these obstacles ranged from 1.86 to 2.83 degrees, with a percentage weight ranged between (62-94.33 %), with an average amounted to (2.37 degrees) according to an importance scale ranging from 1-3 degrees, This average shows that the technical obstacles at an important level, as shown in the following table:

Table: Distribution of respondents according to their views on the axis of technical obstacles

Order	Technical obstacles	Important	Somewhat important	unimportant	Weighted mean	The average of the percentage weight
1	Weak cooperation of governmental executive foundations with agricultural organizations.	93	8	5	2.83	94.33
2	Lack of infrastructure for cooperative agricultural organizations (headquarters, stores, marketing centers, agricultural land, etc.).	74	32	0	2.69	89.66
3	Absence of a studied plan for the expansion of cooperative agricultural organizations.	56	31	19	2.34	78
4	The lack of formation of agricultural organizations Although there is a possibility for that	53	32	21	2.30	76.66
5	Lack of staff with expertise and culture in cooperative work.	48	34	24	2.22	74
6	The locations of cooperative agricultural organizations away from farmers wishing to benefit from their services.	34	24	48	1.86	62
Average answers of respondents					2.37	80.60

In the table above, most respondents confirmed on the paragraph (Weak cooperation of governmental executive foundations with agricultural organizations) which has obtained the highest average importance amounted to (2.83) degree and a percentage weight amounted to (94.33). This may be attributed to:

- 1- There is no legal framework that imposes on governmental executive foundations cooperation between them and the agricultural organizations.
- 2- The weakness of coordination methods followed by the administrations of these organizations, and the lack of awareness of the importance of coordination and mechanisms in activating the role of agricultural organizations to meet the needs of their members and contribute to sustainable agricultural development.

As for the paragraphs of (The locations of cooperative agricultural organizations away from farmers wishing to benefit from their services) came in the last order among the technical obstacles facing the work of the agricultural organizations with average importance amounted to (1.86 degree) and a percentage weight amounted to (62), which may be attributed to:

- 1- The spread of modern means of communication (mobile, the Internet) through which to communicate with the farmers belonging to them.
- 2- Farmers used to review the agricultural institutions in the centers of cities where the headquarters of agricultural organizations within them.

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