PREFACE

Agriculture in Iran is an old and complex way of life. It covers a wide spectrum of economic activity. Before the boom of oil agriculture has formed the basic economy of the land for millenia and occupied a commanding height of the Iranian economy.

The country is large with diverse climatic conditions and little communication which has led to the development of agriculture on different parametre in different sub-regions.

With a large and rapid growing population — quite apart from shortages of rainfall, lingering the age old agricultural practices, archaic method of land tenure in vogue, absentee land lords, lack of education, shortages of capital, poor input, market and communication system inefficient and long time continued war—demand of food day by day increases in Iran.

During the late fifties Iran's food production was perilously close to being in balance with demand. Rapid population growth (3.61%) per annum, the expanding per capita want of a growing industrial labour force and other job opportunities in urban areas bring pressure to bear on food supply. In 1984 Iran's import of food stuff reached worth 315620 million Rials (US $ 3.67 billion) which was only
modestly reduced in 1985. Rice import is being cut back and additional aid saved by reducing rice import is given to rice growers. But at the same time on the part of the government several instances of their slackness in terms of decision making have also been observed such as just after the revolution leaders of the government announced that emphasis would be given to traditional agriculture and on the existing agricultural land.

In 1978 at the time of Shah, short term credit given to the farmers was only US $ 600 million. It was tremendously increased to US $ 11900 million by the revolutionary government for intensive agriculture in 1983, a twenty fold increase, and in 1984 it was US $ 2300 million, an increase of four fold. Inspite of all these extended credits facilities farmers have been reluctant to cultivate long term, high value crops. Instead they have put their efforts into annual crops that yield a quick return, particularly wheat which has got special attention and biggest subsidy by the government. Other crops either got less attention or were in low profile, as a result around Tehran where facilities of all kind were present there was a big change but in other parts of the country there was no such an impact of this policy consequently progress has been uneven.

Perceiving the significant role agriculture can play in improving the economic development of the country on
one hand and political threat posed to the agricultural sector on the other, government which was previously ambivalent announced several concessions and subsidies to the farmers. Some scientists and experts are also taking interest in several novel transformative measures for the betterment of the peasantry and their corrective measures undoubtedly will help avert the bleak picture facing the study region at large.