

## **Conservation and Environmental Issues in Revitalizing Iraqi Agriculture**

**Ekhlass Jarjees**

**Samir A. El-Swaify**

**Catherine Chan-Halbrendt**

**Ali Fares**

**Sahar Zaghoul**

*Hawaii-Iraq Partnership for Agricultural Higher Education And Development (AHEAD)*

*University of Hawaii at Manoa*

*Honolulu, Hawaii 96822 USA*

Revitalizing higher education in agriculture is essential for rebuilding Iraq's capacity for addressing food security needs, building a healthy population, and achieving strategic self-sufficiency in the short and long terms. These are fundamental issues despite the dominance of Iraq's modern economy by oil revenues.

Sustainable (appropriate input) agricultural development is now advocated as most compatible with resource use efficiency and enhancement of environmental quality. Teaching and practicing sustainable agriculture requires a well trained cadre of agricultural scientists and outreach professionals, cutting-edge curricula, well-informed leaders and administrators, and state-of-the-art infrastructure and well-equipped facilities. The objectives of the AHEAD project were to strengthen academic programs and extension in agricultural sciences and to rehabilitate the infrastructure for teaching and research at the Universities of Mosul and Dohuk. As opportunities arose, we also engaged representatives of other Iraqi universities and technical institutes. Project activities encompassed nine scopes that will be described in detail in this presentation.

In addition, we have identified a number of serious ecological and environmental concerns in various parts of the country, all of which require urgent action. These include the restoration of wildlife habitats in the north and the extensively altered marshlands in the south.

Since the AHEAD program was only the beginning step in a steep ladder of revitalization, and was limited in geographic scope; we and representatives of other Iraqi institutions are now focusing on potential new partnerships to extend our accomplishments to regional and national scales.