

Rural Development in Iran



Rural communities in Iran play a pivotal role in ensuring food security, preserving natural resources, and sustaining the nation's cultural heritage. As key contributors to agriculture, livestock, handicrafts, and traditional practices, they not only bolster the national economy but also serve as guardians of Iran's historical and cultural identity. Addressing economic disparities, improving infrastructure, enhancing quality of life, and strengthening social capital in rural areas are thus essential to national development. The Iranian government has prioritized **sustainable and participatory rural development**, implementing targeted programs across multiple sectors—agriculture, healthcare, education, community empowerment, resource management, and village revitalization. Below are key initiatives driving progress in rural Iran:

1. Agricultural Extension: Modernizing Farming Practices

To promote sustainable agriculture, increase rural incomes, and reduce poverty, Iran has implemented two major programs under its **new agricultural extension system**:

a. Agricultural Zoning

- Agricultural lands are divided into zones, each managed by a government-appointed expert.
- Enhances farmer-expert collaboration, accelerates knowledge transfer, and integrates technical and local expertise.
- Ensures effective implementation of policies at the village and farm levels.

b. Agricultural and Rural Knowledge Management Network

- Established under the **Law of Productivity Enhancement** to empower producers.
- Features "**Designated Researchers**" (academic or industry experts) who provide scientific and technical support to extension agents.

- Facilitates the dissemination of research findings and best practices.

2. Empowering Rural and Nomadic Women

Recognizing women's critical role in rural economies, the **Ministry of Agriculture** has launched key initiatives:

a. Training Women Facilitators

- Over **27,000 villages** now have trained female facilitators to enhance project success rates.

b. Professional Trainer Development

- Two qualified individuals per province receive advanced training to mentor grassroots women in development activities.

c. Small Business Development

- Supports entrepreneurship in **sericulture, poultry farming, beekeeping, medicinal plants, and home-based agro-businesses**.
- Provides technical consulting and mentorship for rural women-led enterprises.

d. Microcredit Funds

- By **2022, 4,275 microcredit funds** were established to finance women-led rural businesses.

3. Social Security for Rural and Nomadic Populations

The **Rural and Nomadic Social Insurance Fund (2004)** offers:

- **Retirement, disability, and survivor benefits** to improve welfare and reduce poverty.
- A safety net that encourages rural retention and economic stability.

4. Healthcare Accessibility in Rural Areas

- **Health houses** and small hospitals provide primary care in most villages.
- **Rural health insurance** and the **Family Physician Program** reduce medical costs and improve healthcare access.



5. Physical and Infrastructural Development

Key programs include:

- **Rural Housing Improvement Plan** – Enhances living conditions.
- **Disaster Recovery Projects** – Rebuilds villages affected by natural calamities.
- **Village Road Upgrades** – Improves connectivity and economic opportunities.
- **Rural Tourism Development** – Preserves cultural heritage while boosting local economies.

6. Rural Governance: Strengthening Local Participation

- **Village councils** are elected locally, ensuring community involvement in decision-making.
- The **village administrator (Dehyar)** acts as a liaison between the government and villagers, managing services like waste disposal, safety, and construction permits.

7. Cultural Preservation and Rural Revitalization

- **Village festivals, exhibitions, and mobile libraries** promote cultural heritage.
- **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)** recognition helps preserve traditional farming knowledge.
- **Tourism infrastructure** development supports sustainable rural economies.

Rural Development as a National Priority

Rural communities are the backbone of Iran's food security, cultural identity, and economic resilience. Through strategic investments in agriculture, healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare, Iran has significantly improved rural livelihoods while safeguarding its rich heritage.

These efforts not only enhance rural quality of life but also position Iran as a model for sustainable and inclusive rural development—a vision that aligns with global goals for equitable progress.

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