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AVAILABILITY OF IRRIGATION WATER TO RICE FARMERS IN THE STA. CRUZ WATERSHED, LAGUNA, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT – The watershed is a life-supporting ecosystem from which rainwater can drain as surface run-off through the river to the irrigation system. Irrigation necessitates sustainable watershed for availability of water to ensure food security. This descriptive research focused on the availability of water to irrigate rice farms. Methods used included household interview, key informant interview, focus group discussion, review of documents, and observation.

Results revealed that there were incidences of limited or absence of water especially during the dry season. Reasons for non-distribution of water included damaged canals, lack of water during the dry season and diversion of water to other farms. The absence of other bodies of water also drove other water users to access irrigation water freely resulting to competition in water resources. Farmers in the downstream areas resorted to the use of water pump to irrigate their fields. The irrigation system was well-managed by the National Irrigation Association (NIA) and Irrigators Association (IA). For irrigation water to be sustainable, the NIA regularly resorted to canalization to avoid water losses. The absence of other bodies of water as source of water was the primary factor for other users to use the irrigation water in their agricultural enterprises. Water was most of the time available but farmers still experienced water shortage during the dry season. The good management of irrigation system and healthy watershed can guarantee sustainability of water supply for future use.

Keywords: irrigation water, water availability, Sta. Cruz River watershed

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