

Improving the Activities of Environmental Control and Expertise Organizations in the Field of Effective Management of Irrigated Lands

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Abstract:

Environmental protection organizations with technical, technological, economic factors also play an important role in increasing the economic and environmental efficiency of the use of irrigated lands in the country. Therefore, this article considers the issues of improving the activities of environmental control and environmental expertise in irrigated areas.

Key words: ecology, economy, use, efficiency, control, expertise, nature, environment, organization, irrigated land, water, activity.

The environmental situation resulting from natural conditions and man-made processes are negative factors that affect the efficiency of irrigated land use systems. The development of science and technology should always be aimed at the creation and maintenance of human activity in harmony with nature.

Studies show that before the development of Mirzachol, the depth of groundwater was 30-40 meters. Once the desert was mastered, they began to appear on the surface, salting the fertile layer of the soil. The lands that gave high yields in the first years, over time, became barren lands. As a result, many farms in the districts received 5-6 quintals of cotton per hectare. But no one admitted the mistake. An example of this can be found in the Surkhan-Sherabad desert, where groundwater was not noticeable at all until it was developed (the level was 20-30 m below the surface). As a result of improper use of irrigation water, groundwater levels in this desert have risen sharply. At present, its level has risen to a depth of 1-1.5 m above the ground [9].

Since 1990, 692.6 thousand hectares of land in the country have fallen into disuse due to various reasons. According to the Amu-Surkhan Irrigation Systems Basin Department, in 2019, 92% of the existing closed drainage networks and 62% of the collector network in Qizirik district of Surkhandarya region became unusable. The area of unsatisfactory land reclamation in the district was 992.1 hectares [7].

These are just some examples of the negative attitudes towards land and water resources. Their number is, unfortunately, very large throughout the republic. Such mistreatment of irrigated lands occurs in all regions of the country.

Unsustainable use of land, water, biological, soil and climatic resources without taking into account the long term leads not only to a decrease in crop yields, but also to the deterioration of the ecological condition of the environment.

There are many enterprises in agriculture that focus not only on intermediate results, but also on the production of environmentally friendly agricultural products and the protection of the environment.

For example, agrochemical enterprises have their own economic and financial plan indicators, which are used to evaluate their activities. However, the activities of these enterprises should be evaluated not only on the basis of the amount of local fertilizers and toxic chemicals used in the fields, but also on the quality of products and environmental conditions from the hectares they cultivate [8].

The task of protecting lands and increasing soil fertility requires their comprehensive study, ie as a major source of income in agriculture and at the same time as an environmental factor of significant socio-economic importance.

Their implementation is carried out in the following main areas:

- restriction of use of agricultural lands in areas not related to agricultural production;
- extensive land reclamation, increasing crop yields, combating soil and wind erosion;
- restoring the productivity of lands that were previously out of agricultural turnover and to involve them in reproduction.

At present, the country has developed a regulatory framework for the rational use of natural resources and the introduction of new technological processes for this purpose. However, they do not provide legal sanctions for preventing some officials from introducing new technologies and equipment that reduce the level of damage to the surrounding natural resources.

Every year, agricultural enterprises are forced to pay large fines to compensate for the damage caused by the deterioration of land quality due to improper design and construction of reclamation systems in the country. However, the damage caused by these fines is part of the cost of production, which is pre-planned in enterprises. Therefore, they do not affect the financial incentives of employees in the enterprise. This means that farms have no interest in environmental protection.

In practice, the country does not pay enough attention to environmental issues in the formation of state policy for sustainable development of economic sectors. The use of outdated environmental standards does not allow the country to conduct objective monitoring and objective assessment of the protection of the environment and the regulation of nature use. At present, the improvement of environmental control over the protection of the environment and the rational use of land remains a key instrument for compliance with the requirements of nature protection legislation.¹

Existing Laws ("On the Concept of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" [4], "On Environmental Control" [2], and "On State Ecological Expertise" [3]) play an important role in improving the effectiveness of nature protection measures and the regulation of irrigated land use systems.

Environmental control is an important legal measure that ensures the rational use of nature and protection of the environment from harmful effects. Encouragement of business entities to comply with environmental requirements is carried out through environmental control. In the process of environmental control, legal measures are taken against environmental violations.

Relations in the field of nature protection and rational use of natural resources in the Republic of Uzbekistan are regulated by the Law "On Nature Protection" and the laws on land and water use and other legal acts.

State management of ecology and nature protection, rational use and reproduction of natural resources in the Republic of Uzbekistan is carried out through the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Committee for Ecology and Nature Protection, local authorities.

¹Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 30, 2019 №PD-5863 "On approval of the Concept of environmental protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030", www.Lex.uz>.docs.

State environmental control is carried out in accordance with the Law "On Environmental Control" [2] and the Regulation "On the implementation of state environmental control", approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on August 5, 2014 [5]. Accordingly, the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection coordinates the activities of specially authorized state bodies in the field of state environmental control (the list of specially authorized bodies is given in the appendix).

The existing system of environmental control in the country consists of four levels: environmental monitoring (State Environmental Monitoring Service), state, production and public control. Each of them has its own function and means of implementing it accordingly.

The State Monitoring Service under the State Committee for Ecology and Nature Protection conducts environmental monitoring of the state of the environment, monitors the effects of physical, chemical and biological processes on the flora and fauna of air, soil and water pollution.

The nationwide environmental monitoring system will be expanded with the provision of services to individual natural objects and complexes. Monitoring of natural objects is carried out through the networks of environmental monitoring bodies of natural resources. Similarly, the Ministry of Water Resources monitors the impact of irrigation on the environment, the State Committee for Industrial Safety of the Republic of Uzbekistan mainly the impact of industrial waste on the environment, the State Inspectorate for Plant Quarantine under the Cabinet of Ministers, etc.

The activities of the state environmental control will be aimed at monitoring compliance with environmental legislation, and it is a type of administrative management, in contrast to the state environmental monitoring, which is limited to the collection and transmission of information on nature protection. The task of state environmental control is the rational use of natural resources and protection of the environment from pollution. An important feature of the state environmental control is that it acts on behalf of the state, without any sectoral or departmental interests.

Unfortunately, this requirement is not always met in practice. For example. The Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, along with the operation of the water management system, also carries out state environmental control over the rational use of water.

The State Committee for Land Resources, Geodesy, Cartography and State Cadastre of the Republic of Uzbekistan should deal with the use of land resources, but at the same time, it carries out environmental control on their rational use on behalf of the state. This situation can be observed in many local authorities, which carry out environmental control in their respective areas. Such examples show that the functions of state environmental control and use of natural resources are often combined.

It is known that the system of use of irrigated lands is a complex complex in which there is an active interaction of land and water resources with other natural resources. Here the scope of activity of the specially authorized bodies of the Republic in the field of nature protection is wide enough.

In order to increase the effectiveness of environmental control in the country, the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection, the state specially authorized state bodies for environmental protection and other ministries and departments for the protection and use of certain types of natural resources and their respective territorial bodies coordinates the increase.

Coordination of control activities of the State Ecological Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan with other state bodies The State Sanitary Epidemiological Surveillance is carried out on the basis of special regulations in cooperation with the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other relevant ministries and departments, as well as public associations.

State environmental inspectors are officials of the state environmental control. The authority given to

nature protection inspectors in accordance with the Law on Nature Protection shall be valid to the extent necessary for the effective performance of the tasks and responsibilities assigned to it.

Irrigated lands are one of the main components of the nature management system. Therefore, production and public environmental control, like other systems of nature use, play an important active role in protecting the environment in irrigated areas.

Environmental control of production is the task of inspecting (monitoring) the implementation of mandatory measures for the protection of nature and production of environmentally friendly products by water distributors (Irrigation Basin Departments) and water consuming enterprises (farmers, dehqan farms, etc.).

Usually, production control in this or that sector is carried out by officials, who are mainly interested in the effective conduct of agricultural production. However, this control cannot be considered complete for the following reason: The farm manager is busy with the day-to-day operations of many enterprises. Therefore, it is busy with the tasks of maintaining soil fertility, fulfilling production plans, making more income from irrigated lands, and cannot pay enough attention to compliance with environmental requirements on irrigated lands. In other words, they consciously or unconsciously prioritize the need and outcome of day-to-day production over prospective tasks related to environmental issues.

Also, one of the important principles of environmental control is public participation. But the public is hardly involved in the implementation of environmental control. There is little explanatory work in this area.

It is known that environmental expertise is one of the most important methods of environmental control. In accordance with the Law "On Ecological Expertise" [3] and the Regulation "On State Ecological Expertise" [6], in order to prevent social, economic and other negative consequences arising from the sale of the object of ecological expertise, means to determine the compliance of other activities with environmental requirements. The current Regulation "On State Ecological Expertise" [6] establishes the procedure for conducting and issuing permits for state ecological expertise of materials (objects) intended for state ecological expertise. According to it, the examination of projects of facilities belonging to categories I, II, III and IV of environmental impact by type of activity of enterprises, organizations is carried out (table attached).

The State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection is the specially authorized state body for conducting ecological expertise in the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as for environmental control. The state ecological expertise is carried out by the following special expert divisions of the State Ecological Committee:

State Unitary Enterprise "State Center for Ecological Expertise" of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Ecology and Environmental Protection carries out the state examination of objects belonging to categories I and II (high and medium risk);

State ecological expertise of objects belonging to categories III and IV (low risk and limited scope) is carried out by the State Center for Ecological Expertise of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the state unitary enterprise "State Center for Ecological Expertise" in the regions and the city of Tashkent.

The results of the environmental impact assessment and environmental standards, the results of environmental audits and public environmental expertise can be used in the state examination of materials (objects). According to the current legislation, the state ecological examination of land management documents determines the measures to be taken by landowners to protect and ensure the rational use of land, the ownership of which is confirmed by the republican agency or its territorial bodies.

Since gaining independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan, along with other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, has been conducting its own independent environmental expertise in the system of environmental assessment. Ukraine, Moldova have created their own model of environmental expertise. The Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia have tried to bring their national legislation in this area closer to the European Rules. Georgia has completely abolished state expertise. The Republic of Belarus has a system that allows the operation of facilities such as Uzbekistan. In Western countries (UK and Germany) it is not always possible to ask for “permission” from an expert to start a particular facility. In all countries, environmentalists cannot object to the state. In Ukraine, environmental experts report directly to governors. [10]

Despite the positive assessment of the work of the UN Economic Commission for Europe in 2019, the state environmental review of the Republic of Uzbekistan has some shortcomings:

There is a shortage of specialists in the field of environmental expertise. The state expertise is not sufficiently aligned with the ESPO Regional Convention on the Environmental Impact Assessment of Transboundary Countries (ratified by ESPO, Finland) put forward by the UN Commission on Europe.

In conclusion, the following problems and solutions for improving the activities of environmental control and expertise organizations in irrigated areas should be noted:

All competent authorities exercising environmental control must act independently. Unfortunately, this requirement is not always met in practice. For example, the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, along with the operation of the water management system, the State Committee for Land Resources, Geodesy, Cartography and State Cadastre of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Committee for Land Management, as well as state environmental control over rational land use is also doing. This raises doubts about the objectivity of the data obtained on environmental control;

The effectiveness of agricultural development often depends on the ecological and economic mechanisms of regulation of the use of irrigated lands, their ability to implement the principles of responsibility and economic interests of entities engaged in the rational use of land, water, biological and climatic resources;

The most optimal concrete form of implementation of ecological and economic functions of nature protection and management of natural resources is the timely and quality control of the ongoing nature protection practices. These require the improvement of the scientific and methodological framework for environmental control and environmental expertise, which is one of the key aspects of solving the whole complex problem of forming a mechanism for controlling the economic and environmental efficiency of the regulation of irrigated land use systems;

Shortcomings in the nature protection activities of organizations of ecological expertise and environmental control in irrigated areas are based on the fact that in most cases environmental control is carried out by the bodies exploiting natural resources (industry, management, enterprise). Due to the fact that the economic result of land use is short-lived (usually at the end of the year) and the environmental consequences are manifested after a certain period of time, economic goals often seem to take precedence over environmental tasks. In some desert areas: Qizirik, Bandikhan, Sherabad districts, where irrigation water is scarce, farmers continue to plant water-intensive crops in order to get high profits (in 2020, rice was planted on 3,000 hectares in Qizirik district alone). As a result, groundwater levels are rising, and the salinity of cropland is increasing. As a result, such lands remain unusable;

Legal and regulatory documents (Laws on Nature Protection, Law on Environmental Control, Law

on State Ecological Expertise and other legal documents) generally state the responsibility of land users for non-compliance with environmental requirements. Despite the fact that more than 90% of irrigated lands are used by farmers, dehkans and other farms, their direct (targeted) liability for violation of nature protection norms is not backed up by legal documents;

In order to increase the effectiveness of nature protection practices, the list of activities subject to state examination (Appendix 2 to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated November 22, 2018 № 949) should include a clause on the ecological assessment of the existing system of irrigated land use (compliance of irrigation and collector-drainage networks and groundwater depth conditions and mineralization levels of wastewater, quality of irrigation, agro-technical and reclamation works with environmental standards);

The current Regulation on the Procedure for Conducting State Ecological Examinations does not stipulate a “strict” requirement for the use of environmental audits and public environmental expert opinions in conducting environmental examinations. However, according to the ESPO Convention, the participation of public organizations in the conduct of state environmental expertise is conditional. Therefore, the mandatory participation of an independent public environmental expertise and environmental audit in the process of assessing the environmental impact of an environmental facility should be provided by law and a specially qualified local expert should be involved to assess the safety of environmental facilities. In designing border facilities, it is necessary to consult with neighboring countries and reach a bilateral agreement;

The activities of organizations and committees of ecological control and ecological expertise should be assessed according to the degree of compliance with the requirements of environmental standards in irrigated areas and water bodies (reservoirs, rivers and lakes) under their control.

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