

## Press Release

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### **Pay Drechsel wins 2015 IWA Development Award**

*Scientist honoured for work on wastewater and resource re-use in agriculture*

(Colombo, 16 October 2015). Pay Drechsel, IWMI's research theme leader for Resource Recovery, Water Quality and Health, has won the 2015 International Water Association's Development Award for Research.

The award will be presented at the opening ceremony of the IWA's Development Congress and Exhibition in Amman, Jordan on Sunday, October 18.

"The award is granted in recognition for Pay's contributions to science which have led to demonstrable impact in low and middle income countries," said Ger Bergkamp, Executive Director of IWA. "[He is] an example to the water community in each corner of the globe."

Drechsel's research has played an important role in developing options for safe wastewater use in countries where treatment capacities are low and informal wastewater irrigation is common. His studies continue to explore the importance of irrigated urban and peri-urban agriculture for food security in cities.

The award, which is granted every two years, recognizes his long track record in research which has contributed to the development of low-cost safety options along the farm to fork pathway. This work directly supported the World Health Organization's multi-barrier concept for safe wastewater irrigation, as has been acknowledged by Robert Bos, the former WHO Coordinator of Water, Sanitation and Health.

"This recognition is a fantastic acknowledgment of more than a decade of research," said Drechsel. "I have been strongly supported in this by my dear colleagues, students and partners, as well as the International Water Management Institute which entrusted me with the task to conceptualize and coordinate our work on water quality, food safety and resource recovery".

"This Award from the IWA, the largest global association of water professionals, is also very special as most of our work is been carried out in those places where the technical solutions we all prefer to see are not yet in place."

German by birth, Drechsel graduated as environmental scientist from the University of Bayreuth and started his career as consultant in Africa. He then became as research coordinator for the continent at the International Board of Soil Research and Management (IBSRAM), being first based in Bangkok and then Ghana where he opened the organization's Africa office. After IWMI incorporated IBSRAM in 2001, Drechsel worked as its sub-regional representative, expanding the number of IWMI staff in Ghana from five to

over thirty. In 2005 he became a research division leader. During his 11 years in West Africa, Drechsel comprehensively analyzed the links between rural-urban food demands and the urban footprint. Given the high density of irrigating farmers in and around cities, he was particularly interested in the pollution of water bodies and consequent food safety risks. This work influenced legislation in Ghana including national strategies, development plans and policies, as well as several international water reuse guidelines and their supplements produced by WHO, FAO and USEPA/USAID. His work on safe wastewater management was also one of several highlights cited in 2012 award of the Stockholm Water Prize to the International Water Management Institute.

Aware of the institutional constraints that low-income countries face, Drechsel's research has from the start been geared towards applied and locally appropriate solutions. This has expanded the technical discussion to include social, economic and institutional options for supporting, for example, the trajectory from informal to formal wastewater use. With a wide breadth of interests ranging from his roots in soil fertility and plant nutrition, to the economics of land degradation, and from participatory on-farm research on incentives for behavior change, to business modeling for transforming fecal sludge into a safe but also viable fertilizer, Drechsel has strongly promoted an inter-disciplinary and impact-orientated approach.

This emphasis has steered the second thrust of his research work on the viability of resource recovery. While water, nutrient and energy reuse are well understood concepts, implementation beyond fully subsidized pilots seldom occurs in the developing world. After moving to the IWMI HQ in Sri Lanka in 2009, Drechsel has coordinated since 2012 a multi-disciplinary research flagship dedicated to business models for resource recovery and reuse under the IWMI led CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems. This has garnered significant attention, both from fellow researchers and the development community.

With about 300 publications, half in peer-reviewed books and journals, and a large array of co-supervised graduate and postgraduate students, Drechsel is recognized as a visionary research leader in the agriculture-sanitation interface of developing countries, and a tireless scientific and technical advisor to numerous projects, international donors and UN agencies.

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**Notes for editors:**

The **International Water Management Institute (IWMI)** is a non-profit, scientific research organization, headquartered in Colombo, which focuses on the sustainable use of water and land resources in developing countries. IWMI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium. CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future. It leads the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems which examines how we can intensify agriculture while still protecting the environment and lifting millions of farm families out of poverty. [www.iwmi.org](http://www.iwmi.org)