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Farmer-led irrigation schemes could transform food security

A new study finds that small-scale irrigation schemes can protect millions of farmers from food insecurity and climate risks in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Against this background the AgWater Solutions, a collaborative project initiated by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and supported by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and several international partners, intends to offer promising investment options to improve the livelihoods and food security of the rural poor.



According to the report: “*Water for wealth and food security: Supporting farmer-driven investments in agricultural water management*”, that was

released at the World Water Week in late August in Stockholm, expanding the use of smallholder water management techniques could increase yields up to 300 percent in some cases, and add tens of billions of US dollars to household revenues across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

As researchers at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) warned, low-cost irrigation methods do exist; they have not reached farmers because policymakers haven't made the necessary investments in water management.

Findings of the three-year AgWater Solutions Research Initiative unearthed for the first time the scale at which enterprising smallholder farmers themselves are driving this revolution by using their own resources innovatively. “Despite constraints, such as high upfront costs and poorly developed supply chains, small-scale farmers across Africa and Asia have moved ahead using their own resources to finance and install irrigation technologies. said IWMI's Meredith Giordano, who coordinated the initiative.

The AgWater Solutions Research Initiative is a collaborative effort involving several international and national partners among others IWMI, IFPRI (from the CGIAR research consortium), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Stockholm Environment Institute, as well as national organisations in the partner countries. The Initiative is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

As part of its activities the AgWater Solutions project developed the Investment Visualizer, an interactive, web-based mapping tool that allows policymakers to determine with a few clicks which of nine irrigation options would be most beneficial to farmers in their sub-region or country—including the number of people reached, yield improvements, and how much smallholder farmers could earn by using it—based on the severity of climate change, the price of crops, and the cost of implementing the chosen approach. The research partners hope this tool will catalyse needed investments in low-cost water management options to allow farmers to meet the food needs of a growing population.

More information: **AgWATER**

The AgWATER Solutions Project

Smallholder farming can and should be an engine for economic growth, poverty reduction and food security. The AgWater Solutions project aims to make this happen by:

- Improving the understanding of agricultural water management (AWM) solutions – especially how farmers can gain access to them and the benefits they provide;