Series Foreword: Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture Series

To find solutions to the water problems already facing many developing countries, we need a better understanding of how we have used water to grow food and to improve rural livelihoods. We need to know which investments in water for rainfed and irrigated agriculture have reduced poverty and increased food security – and which have not. We need to better understand not only the benefits of irrigation, but also the costs in terms of environmental degradation and pollution.

The Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture, an international research, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing programme, takes stock of the past 50 years of water development for agriculture, the water management challenges that communities are facing today and solutions that people have developed. The results of this research will enable farming communities, governments and donors to make better-quality investment decisions to meet food and environmental security targets in the near future and over the next 25 years.

The Assessment is done by a coalition of partners which includes 11 Future Harvest agricultural research centres supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and partners from some 40 research and development institutes globally. Currently, the Governments of The Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia and Taiwan, and the Rockefeller Foundation have supported this work.

The primary research findings will be presented in a series of books that will form the Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture. The books will cover a range of vital topics in the area of water, agriculture, food security and ecosystems – the entire spectrum of developing and managing water in agriculture, from fully irrigated to fully rainfed lands. They are about people and society, why they decide to adopt certain practices and not others, and, in particular, how water management can help poor people. They are about ecosystems – how agriculture affects ecosystems, the goods and services ecosystems provide for food security, and how water can be managed to meet both food and environmental security objectives. This is the first book in the series.

Effectively managing water to meet food and environmental objectives will require the concerted action of individuals from across several professions and disciplines – farmers, water managers, economists, hydrologists, irrigation specialists, agronomists and social

scientists. The material presented in this book represents the first effort that brings this diverse group of people together to present a truly cross disciplinary perspective on water productivity. The complete set of books should be invaluable for resource managers, researchers and field implementers. They will provide source material from which policy statements, practical manuals and educational and training material can be prepared.

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