
Series Foreword

Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture

There is broad consensus on the need to improve water management and to invest in water for food, as these are critical to meeting the millennium development goals (MDGs). The role of water in food and livelihood security is a major issue of concern in the context of persistent poverty and continued environmental degradation. Although there is considerable knowledge on the issue of water management, an overarching picture on the water–food–livelihood–environment nexus is missing, leaving uncertainties about management and investment decisions that will meet both food and environmental security objectives.

The Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture (CA) is an innovative multi-institute process aimed at identifying existing knowledge and stimulating thought on ways to manage water resources to continue meeting the needs of both humans and ecosystems. The CA critically evaluates the benefits, costs and impacts of the last 50 years of water development and the challenges currently facing communities. It assesses innovative solutions and explores consequences of potential investment and management decisions. The CA is designed as a learning process, engaging networks of stakeholders to produce knowledge synthesis and methodologies. The main output of the CA is an assessment report that aims to guide investment and management decisions in the near future considering their impact over the next 50 years in order to enhance food and environmental security to support the achievement of the MDGs. This assessment report is backed by CA research and knowledge-sharing activities.

The primary assessment research findings are presented in a series of books that will form the scientific basis for the CA. The books will cover a range of vital topics in the areas of water, agriculture, food security and ecosystems – the entire spectrum of developing and managing water in agriculture, from fully irrigated to fully rain-fed 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 second 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, fisherfolk, water managers, economists, hydrologists, irrigation specialists, agronomists and social scientists. This book represents an effort to bring a diverse group of people together to present a truly cross-disciplinary perspective on water, food and environmental issues within the coastal zone. The complete set of books would be invaluable for resource managers, researchers and field implementers. These books will provide source material from which policy statements, practical manuals and educational and training material can be prepared.

The CA is done by a coalition of partners that includes 11 Future Harvest agricultural research centres supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and partners from some 80 research and development institutes globally. Co-sponsors of the assessment, institutes that are interested in the results and help frame the assessment, are the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, FAO and the CGIAR.

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