Foreword

In May 2014, researchers, practitioners and policy makers came together in Addis Ababa under the auspices of an event co-convened by the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the Water, Land and Ecosystems programme of the CG system. The event drew inspiration from two preceding meetings, one convened by CARE in Morogoro, Tanzania, in August 2013 at which a 'regional charter on investing in water for smallholder farmers' was launched and an event in Addis Ababa to mark World Food Day convened by IWMI in October of the same year. Both events noted the serious challenges farmers in East Africa face given uncertain rainfall and a host of other pressures on agroecological systems.

More widely, this also reflected a growing sense amongst water scientists, governments and all the players and consumers in private sector food supply chains that farmers play the major role in managing water and land on behalf of society. For this reason farmers need to be able to operate in circumstances which enable them to meet the food needs of society, and to steward the ecosystems of water, biodiversity and the atmosphere, they need infrastructure and the facility to operate effectively in markets for local to global levels.

Bearing these concerns in mind, the May 2014 meeting launched a process of developing this sourcebook after agreement that there was a pressing need for greater regional consolidation of knowledge on improving water management for smallholder farmers. The meeting allowed participants the opportunity to explore how an emerging concept of Water-Smart Agriculture (WaSA) could support future policy attention to and investment in this critical area. Developed further by participants at the meeting, WaSA provides the organizing framework for this volume, in particular drawing attention to the need for better packaging of support across a range of agroecologies in order to build interventions that are more effective in delivering sustainable benefits to farmers in the water, land and ecosystems in which they are situated.

Above all, WaSA recognizes that there is no simple solution in East Africa—or anywhere else—to the many challenges facing the smallholders. However, the approach argues that much can be achieved by using specific, tried and tested technologies and practices and learning about the costs and benefits of use in conjunction with farmers themselves. Many of these technologies and practices are already well-known and the key challenge lies in enabling wider uptake, including triggering 'early adoption' across communities through demonstration by farmers at a local level. In addition, there is a need to match these approaches with incentives and policies (including those related to markets, value chains and financial services) that support and encourage future farmer efforts.

This collection of articles develops further the WaSA approach in East Africa and is aimed at a distinct group of users: development managers, educators, local administrators and policy makers. These are people in a position to utilize practical research outputs and to encourage and enable future impact at scale at both local and national levels.

It is important to note that this sourcebook is not meant as a definitive collection, but rather a starting point for thinking and inspiring future efforts. In this regard, the editors hope that as the global community moves forward in 2015 towards agreeing a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (in a year designated the International Year of Soils), WaSA can play some role in influencing the implementation of the SDGs and can contribute to ensuring that farmers in East Africa achieve greater productivity, food security, climate resilience, and ecosystem sustainability in the face of mounting development challenges.

Divided into five sections comprising key issue areas, the sourcebook adopts a simple system of tagging cross-cutting themes that supports the reading in linking between case study examples. The editors welcome feedback and suggestions on material that could complement existing examples.

As a critical contribution to the global challenge of agricultural water management for smallholder farmers, I commend this sourcebook to you and encourage its uptake and use.

Yours sincerely,

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