

# Irrigation management transfer

Worldwide efforts and results



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# Irrigation management transfer

Worldwide efforts and results

FAO  
WATER  
REPORTS

32

by

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## Documents available on CD-ROM

- Irrigation Management Transfer country profiles, case studies and WUA legislation country profiles for a number of selected countries, i.e. Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Burundi, Chile, China (Hebei), China (Hubei), China (Hunan), China (Ningxia), China (Shaanxi), China (Shenyang), Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ghana, India (Andhra Pradesh), India (Karnataka), India (Madhya Pradesh), India (Orissa), India (Rajasthan), Indonesia – large systems, Indonesia – small systems, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan (Punjab), Pakistan (Sindh), Peru, Philippines, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Taiwan Province of China, Tunisia, Turkey, United States of America and Zimbabwe.
- International e-mail conference on irrigation management transfer (2001) organized by FAO and the International Network for Participatory Irrigation Management.
- Bibliography and links.

### System requirements to use the CD-ROMs:

- PC with Intel Pentium® processor and Microsoft® Windows 95 / 98 / 2000 / Me / NT / XP
- 256 MB of RAM
- 50 MB of available hard-disk space
- SuperVGA monitor
- 256 colours at 1024 x 768
- Adobe Acrobat® Reader (not included on CD-ROM)

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## Preface

The process of devolvement of authority and responsibility from government agencies managing irrigation systems to private-sector entities (often a water users association) established for such a purpose is known as irrigation management transfer (IMT) and has been utilized as a tool for irrigation sector reform in more than 60 countries. The introduction of the IMT process can be traced back to the mid-1970s. However, the apex of the application of IMT occurred in the early 1990s after governments faced increasing financial difficulties in maintaining the irrigation systems and when increasing disenchantment with their performance reached its peak. Thus, the accumulated experience with the application of the IMT process now covers almost 40 years, with the last 15 years or so providing an increasing wealth of information.

The Water Development and Management Unit (NRLW) of FAO decided that IMT was an important issue that needed to be documented and analysed. Together with a number of collaborators, with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) being the major one, NRLW designed a strategy to implement a set of activities that would (i) acquire in-depth knowledge on how countries were applying IMT, on their approaches, on successes and failures; and (ii) derive lessons and provide feedback to those same countries (and new ones in the process of initiating IMT activities). These activities included: an e-mail conference on the subject; various studies to gain specific information from countries engaged in the process; field visits to key countries; and a worldwide literature review. These activities spanned a period of almost 6 years.

The present water report is the final product emanating from efforts by FAO, IWMI and others to document and understand the implications of the irrigation sector embarking on a wide reform process. However, this document concentrates mainly on the results derived from the surveys undertaken in 33 countries. In order to carry out these surveys, three types of document were prepared: (i) IMT case studies, seen as in-depth documentation of the IMT process in countries where a major effort had already been undertaken or was underway; (ii) IMT profiles, involving a large set of countries and derived through a brief questionnaire; and (iii) legislation on water users associations (legislation country profiles), with an emphasis on legal issues emanating from newly established associations.

The lessons that have emerged from these efforts are both encouraging and reasons for concern. Much is now known about the conditions that need to be met if a reasonable degree of success from the interventions is to be expected. For example, political support at the highest level is essential. Similarly, IMT is not a “time-bound” intervention; each country or region needs to move at its own pace and adapt to its particular cultural and socio-economic environment. It follows that there may not be a single IMT “model”, and that trying to impose outside experiences will probably end in failure. On the other hand, the lessons already learned should provide the basis for others to keep in mind and build on those experiences.

Parallel to the introduction of IMT, there are many other issues that countries involved in the process need to consider, e.g. a clear legal framework for water rights, establishment of users associations, and land tenure. The IMT process does not stop once the management transfer has occurred. Indeed, it may be just the starting point for greater interventions, including the formulation of an entirely new structure for providing services to the emerging and revitalized irrigation systems. Thus, the introduction of IMT may open the door for further reforms relating to credit access, marketing and improvements in other support services.

However, key questions remain as to who will be responsible for the long-term rehabilitation or modernization of transferred schemes, how should governments guarantee the sustainability of support services to irrigated agriculture, how IMT will affect current water rights arrangements and how farmers' organizations can be made effective in representing farmers' interest at scheme, river basin and national levels. Answering unequivocally the above-mentioned questions is part of the work ahead.

It is hoped that this water report will provide a valuable contribution to the irrigation sector.

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## List of acronyms

DSI	General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works, Turkey
GVO	Gross value output
ID	Irrigation district
IMT	Irrigation management transfer
INPIM	International Network for Participatory Irrigation Management
IWM	Integrated water management
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
O&M	Operation and maintenance
PIM	Participatory irrigation management
PPP	Public–private partnership
WUA	Water users association

