

Book Review

Expanding the Frontiers of Irrigation Management Research—Results of Research and Development at the International Irrigation Management Institute, 1984 to 1995

Douglas J. Merrey

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The purpose of this book is to consolidate into one accessible document, an overview of IIMI's research results in the first ten years from the institute's inception in late 1984, to the end of 1995. The primary audience for the book are researchers in water resources and irrigation management. Policy makers and water resources managers will find sections of the book interesting and thought-provoking. Douglas Merrey, presently Deputy Director General-Elect of IIMI, is eminently suited to be the author of this book. Except for a brief period in 1996, Dr Merrey has been on the staff of IIMI since 1985 and he has a well-deserved reputation as a researcher, research manager, and communicator, and has made significant contributions to IIMI's programmes and projects.

During IIMI's first six years, most of the institute's funding came from bilateral sources for applied research and institutional strengthening activities in specific countries. Consequently, development and institutional strengthening received a higher priority than global research. After joining the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research in 1991, the priorities shifted towards strategic research. The book, by documenting research results during IIMI's first decade, sets the stage for the second decade. It is clear from the book that IIMI has produced interesting and useful research results.

The book organizes the presentation of the research results in the format of the new programme structure introduced in 1995, devoting one chapter to each of the four programmes and a separate chapter describing IIMI's achievements in training and institutional strengthening. A concluding chapter considers some of the limitations in the research outputs to date as a basis for suggesting improvements in the future, and making some suggestions for future research and institutional strengthening initiatives.

The book demonstrates that IIMI has made important contributions not only to global understanding of irrigation, but also more broadly to water resources management and irrigated agriculture. First, its documentation in a number of countries of the large gaps between the reality of irrigation performance, the potential or expected performance, and assumed performance has been very valuable. Second, the results of its work on the performance of Pakistan's mega-irrigation systems have enormous implications for the future of irrigated agriculture in that country, and possibly in other semi-arid and arid countries with large water-scarce irrigation systems. It has documented not only the high degree of unreliability and inequity of surface water deliveries on distributaries

and minors (previously assumed to perform as designed), but has shown the relationship between this unreliability and inequity and the increasingly serious threat of salinity and sodicity. Similarly, its work on design and performance of irrigation systems in West Africa, its work on management transfer, its documentation of governance and institutional problems, and its use of participatory methodologies in research and policy analysis are all important contributions which can be used to make future improvements.

This exceedingly useful book is essential reading for irrigation researchers, policy makers, planners and water resource system managers in countries, and multi-lateral financing agencies and bilateral donors, who have invested—and who are still investing—enormous amounts in irrigation systems in the developing countries. It is sure to engender appreciation of the contributions of IIMI in its first decade of existence and enhance support for IIMI's work in the future.

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