

Objective

The project aims to improve farmer livelihoods, equity and community management in smallholder irrigation schemes in southern Africa.

The objectives are to:

- ◆ Determine how the package of agricultural innovation platforms and simple tools for water management can be scaled up and out.
- ◆ Identify which institutions lead to inequity among farmers in water supply and financial benefit from irrigation schemes, and how this inequity can be reduced.
- ◆ Develop irrigation policy options for governments and multilateral agencies, so that smallholder-managed schemes can be more profitable, equitable and self-sustaining.

Expected scientific results

- ◆ Develop more profitable and self-sustaining irrigation communities as a result of individual and social learning, and institutional and technological change.
- ◆ Develop systems to enable farmers to share their new knowledge with other farmers in adjacent irrigation schemes, and ways to help government agencies move from directing farmer learning to facilitating farmer self-learning.
- ◆ Increase efficient use of water and fertilisers resulting in higher crop yields.
- ◆ Assess methods to instil in district and national institutions the capacity to implement agricultural innovation platforms for broader scale out and up.
- ◆ Combine technical and institutional interventions for greater impacts and assessment of why multiple interventions are more successful.
- ◆ Assess who is benefiting most from the labour savings, increased production and better access to crop processing facilities and markets to inform practices for equitable, pro-poor irrigation development.

Expected impact/outcomes

- ◆ Increase efficient water use, leading to expansion of irrigated cropping sector.
- ◆ Change farmers' mindsets from subsistence to market-oriented practices so they choose more profitable crops with more reliable markets.
- ◆ Improve access to cheaper and higher quality farming inputs.
- ◆ Reduce social conflicts and more effective farmer organisations.
- ◆ Reduce irrigation labour, enabling more time for other livelihood activities.
- ◆ Increase demand on governments to support the irrigation sector's needs.
- ◆ Facilitate agricultural innovation platforms, and the development of district-scale agricultural service providers and markets supported by extension staff.
- ◆ Inclusion of project findings by governments to provide answers on how best to meet their key irrigation policy targets.
- ◆ Develop private sector partnerships leading to more vibrant local economies, as all value chain stakeholders benefit from increases in agro-economic activities.

