

# A Virtual Irrigation Academy to improve water productivity in Malawi, Tanzania and South Africa



## Key details

### Location

Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania

### Duration

**Start** Jun 2015

**End** Dec 2019

### Budget

AUD 3,248,006

### Commissioned organisation

CSIRO

### Partners

Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa; Department of Agricultural Research Services; Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; Solutech; UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

### Project Leader

Richard Stirzaker - CSIRO Land and Water

### Program

Water

### Project code

LWR/2014/085

irrigation monitoring tools with an online communication and learning system.

The monitoring tools were designed to fit farmers' mental model and to give an output that was linked to action. Colours illustrated information on soil water suction, nitrate concentration and salinity levels. These colours represented action thresholds, and not numbers with complicated units.

Each country formed 'learning coalitions' comprising farmers, extension workers, a district irrigation officer, and research and project staff. Each coalition was located around an irrigation scheme, and built their own case studies based on experiential learning. The learning coalition expanded to neighbouring irrigation communities, using the VIA as the major resource.

A sister project, [LWR/2016/137](#): Transforming irrigation into profitable and self-sustaining systems in southern Africa, combined the tools and VIA with agricultural innovation platforms to overcome market and water supply problems in Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

## Overview

**This project created a monitoring and social learning system to improve agricultural irrigation water productivity in Malawi, South Africa, and Tanzania.**

The Virtual Irrigation Academy (VIA) combined new

## Project Outcomes

- Captured physical data from irrigation schemes in real time, so that project and country leaders could understand the situation and mentor extension workers and farmers.
- Captured dialogue between farmers, extension workers and scientists to analyse how learning occurs.

- Included training resources: videos on equipment installation and maintenance, data interpretation and shared success stories with other farmers in the project countries.



**ACIAR**

