Water scarcity limits crop-livestock production in the Volta Basin

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Rainwater management strategies (RMS) have been extensively studied and promoted in the Volta Basin during the last decades. However, water scarcity still limits the agricultural production of most of the smallholder crop-livestock farms of the basin.

To learn about the underlying causes for success or failure in the application of RMS and to identify current research and development needs, a review of past research and development projects on rainwater management in the Volta Basin has been undertaken. In reaction to continuous changes in global drivers, priorities of institutions and needs of smallholders, RMS have evolved since the 1960s, together with the concepts related to them.

While different climatic and topographic characteristics have triggered a differential promotion of RMS in the various agroecological zones of the Burkinabe and Ghanaian parts of the Volta Basin, adoption of RMS was mainly due to the type of approach used by projects and programs. These approaches have been continuously adapted, from top-down approaches to participatory development, from focus on crop productivity to landscape approach.

Current trends in projects include supplementary irrigation, dry-season crops and market access, integrated solutions, landscape approach and livelihoods, RMS adoption and upscaling, and water governance. Fewer projects include pure technical aspects, and the institutional and socioeconomic aspects are becoming more important.
Yet, there is a gap between what projects plan to achieve and what is implemented on the ground. Scope for improvement lies in improved coordination, collaboration and communication between the various institutions and organisms active in the sector of agricultural water management in the Volta Basin.

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