



Opportunities for small scale irrigators

Increasing food production through irrigation in the dry season improves livelihoods. Entrepreneurs and farmers in Africa are already using groundwater, river or stream pumping, and private small reservoirs and ponds in emerging irrigation systems.

The **Innovation Lab for Small Scale Irrigation (ILSSI)** is working in Ghana, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, where small scale irrigation can contribute to national development goals.

The aim of ILSSI is to identify ways of creating opportunities for farmers and other actors across scales. Researchers, with farmers and extension workers, are piloting systems to improve water lifting, conveyance and field distribution. They are also examining mechanisms to improve access to small scale irrigation technologies for both women and men. The project considers scaling technologies and practices with a focus on both the market and environmental sustainability.



A farmer using a solar pump to irrigate avocado, vegetables and fodder in Lemo, Ethiopia. (Photo: Petra Schmitter, IWMI)

Challenges

Transitioning from subsistence, rainfed systems to commercial irrigation requires enhancing the efficiency of water management and expanding and increasing the use of best-bet technologies. Small scale irrigation technologies must be profitable for farmers and investors and must fit the context of the farm and its biophysical environment as well as the market. When expanding and increasing the use of irrigation, whether using small, medium or large scale systems, consideration of the practical and sustainable limits of the market and the environment is crucial.

How ILSSI is contributing to solutions

The project team are working on a number of interrelated components to meet these challenges:

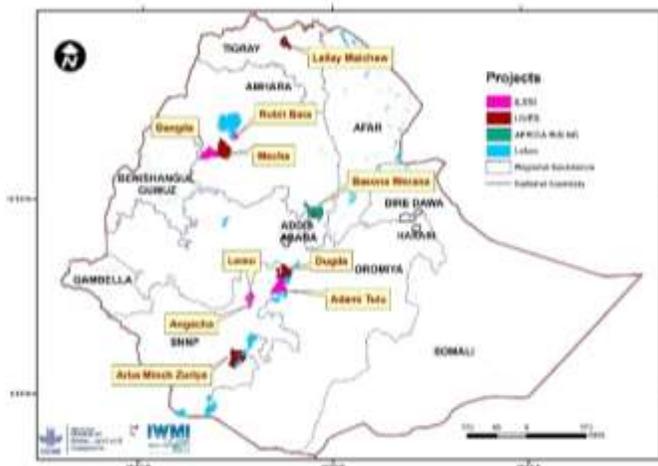
- Piloting; small-scale irrigation technologies that test combinations of water sources (shallow ground and surface water), water extraction technologies (motorized pumps, rope and washer, solar pumps and pulleys), appropriate water application methods (overhead, drip, furrow), and irrigation scheduling tools.
- Generating biophysical and socio-economic data to assess opportunities and constraints to scaling these technologies and approaches.
- Identifying potential business models to access small-scale irrigation for men, women and youth.
- Exploring options for irrigating fodder that supports enhanced livestock production.
- Ensuring the environmental and economic sustainability of irrigation interventions from farm to watershed scale through an integrated, process-oriented modeling suite including SWAT, APEX and FARMSIM.
- Identifying potential pathways leading from irrigation to improved nutrition.

Pathway to impact: upscaling from the field to the watershed



Field intervention sites

In Ethiopia, ILSSI is piloting interventions in three regions with around 200 women and men farmers.



Pilot sites under ILSSI and related projects

- Amhara Region, Dangila and Robit woreda
- Oromia Region, Adami Tulu woreda
- SNNPR Region, Lemo woreda

ILSSI also shares data from other Feed the Future (Africa RISING) and GAC (Global Affairs Canada -LIVES) projects to ensure more robust and relevant modeling.

From field level interventions to modeling scenarios and supporting decisions

At all project sites, the research team are working with national universities and research partners, extension, subject matters specialists, local irrigation and finance cooperatives, and women and men farmers to pilot technologies and practices that hold potential for scaling up small scale irrigation. Primary data is being collected through installation of measurement instruments, sampling and field interventions in the relevant watersheds, as well as through socio-economic surveys and farmer field books. In these, farmers are being encouraged to record data on daily and seasonal practices. By sampling and testing water quality in the watersheds the project team are able to monitor and analyse different water sources when considering multiple uses of them. This primary data is complemented with secondary data from national and international resources. ILSSI uses the data in a suite of models - SWAT, FARMSIM and APEX - that form an Integrated Decision Support System (IDSS).

Partnerships, capacity and engagement: working toward impact

The ILSSI team is led by Texas A&M University with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) leading field interventions and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) conducting household surveys. Continuous stakeholder engagement throughout is a core approach of the ILSSI project.

In Ethiopia, the project team engages scientists and students from Bahir Dar University, Arba Minch University, the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute and the Southern Agricultural Research Institute. The project expects to invest around USD 2 million in research, capacity development and engagement to support investment decision-taking in Ethiopia over the project period (2013 to 2018). ILSSI helps to develop the research and publishing skills of students and young professionals in partner and stakeholder organizations. The project is contributing to strengthening the capacity of farmers, extension workers and private sector suppliers and service providers. For example, the research team has led capacity development training on irrigation scheduling, agronomic practices for irrigated drop production, and managing micro-finance loans for investment in small scale irrigation. ILSSI also holds annual training sessions for researchers and practitioners on using the IDSS suite of models to ensure decision support continues after completion of the project.

Further information

This leaflet has been produced by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) www.iwmi.org. For more information on this project in Ethiopia, contact: **Dr. Petra Schmitter, project leader in Ethiopia and Tanzania**, (p.schmitter@cgiar.org) and **Dr. Nicole Lefore, project manager** (e-mail: n.lefore@cgiar.org).