

THE MONTREAL ICID DECLARATION

July 2002

The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage considered Food Production Under Conditions of Water Scarcity as the main theme at its 18th Congress in Montreal, Canada. Thus food production under limited water and the integration of irrigation, drainage and flood control were of primary concern to over 800 delegates.

Life cannot exist without water. ICID recognizes the importance of this vital and scarce resource in producing the food required to meet the needs of an ever-increasing world population. Since agriculture in developing countries consumes about 85% of its water to meet their needs, this Congress declares that new management tools are needed to increase food production.

This Congress also declares that national and regional policies need developing. These include the inter-basin transfer of water, protecting coastal lands from the intrusion of saline water, various water saving techniques with special reference to arid and semi-arid tropical areas and the inclusion of all stakeholders in making decisions regarding water management.

We declare that alleviating poverty while ensuring the sustainability of the environment under conditions of limited water resources and continuing growth of the population is of vital concern. We recognize that food production in the past was primarily linked to the world's land resources. Today, however, water is the main limiting factor for agriculture and food production. Thus the supply, quality and efficient use of water will dominate agricultural production.

Since the poor are often the hardest hit by water-related problems, water security should be part of any poverty alleviation program. Also the increase in the world's population places great demands upon the agricultural sector. These demands can only be resolved through the efficient use of irrigation and drainage. They are the cornerstones of world food security. To meet them we must improve irrigation efficiency on existing lands and encourage participatory management in all systems.

ICID recognizes the importance of integrating the management of irrigation, drainage and flood control. It emphasizes the need to design adequate drainage systems concurrently with the design of each irrigation system. This will minimize salinization and water logging thus optimizing the efficacy of each irrigation system.

We declare that private sector participation is a necessary and desirable mechanism to augment investment in upgrading the performance of irrigation systems. To achieve success with such participation, careful consideration of the legal, economic and resource management mechanisms are needed.

The fact that irrigation plays a critical role in producing the world's food supplies is not well appreciated by most people, ICID will develop an education program that provides the necessary information to help people understand the importance of irrigation in their lives.

Women and young professionals are playing an ever-increasing role in the design and management of irrigation and drainage systems. Thus we declare that their active participation in the affairs of our Commission be encouraged.

Finally, as research scientists, engineers and practitioners in irrigation, drainage and flood control we declare that we will use all available relative knowledge in the execution of our duties.