

Water Saving in Irrigation

Outcome of the Conference, 13-14 November 2019, Montpellier, France

The French National Committee of ICID (AFEID) co-organized a two-day conference about « Water saving in irrigation » in Montpellier (France), on 13-14th November 2019. The conference focused on scientific and technical questions linked with the water savings achievable through changes in irrigation system or management, both at transport (networks) and application (plot) level. It highlighted scientific issues related to irrigation efficiency and productivity. From a technical point of view, it targeted all irrigation systems (surface, sprinkler, localized irrigation), and scheduling tools as well.

The event brought together 250 participants, originating from France and 17 other European countries. The audience included the agricultural profession (agricultural advisers, water users associations, chambers of agriculture), institutions (water agencies, agriculture ministries, European Commission), scientists, private companies (irrigation equipment, sensors, irrigation scheduling tools) and students. The program consisted of oral presentations, flash presentations of private companies, field trips, a scientific workshop, a final round table and a VIP evening. AFEID took part in the logistical set-up and the communication via its national and international partners.

This conference was an opportunity to (1) exchange on levers to save water and improve irrigation efficiency, (2) share feedback on quantitative irrigation water savings achieved in different European member states, (3) share methodologies used in different countries to assess potential achievable water savings, (4) encourage exchanges between operational, institutional, political, technical and scientific stakeholders, (5) exhibit some innovating technological solutions to save water in irrigation. The French methodology, developed at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, to assess water savings in irrigation was presented, as well as other European approaches.

The conference encouraged networking of European irrigation experts that all have to face climate change challenges, either with a longtime experience in the South, or with recent drought events in the North and East. It has pointed out several research directions to be carried on, such as methods and indicators to evaluate irrigation efficiency, developments of new tools, integration of new concepts to assess irrigation performance (soil, energy, environment, labor time...). Some renewed areas of investigation also raised, such as newly irrigated crops (vine, olive), development of scheduling and decision support tools, the interactions between agro-ecological practices and irrigation. A large panel of innovative solutions to save irrigation water was presented by many French and European companies, including hard- and software products that help developing a more water-efficient irrigation.

All presentations of the conference are available and can be downloaded online:

<https://watersaving.sciencesconf.org/>

