

Message from the INWEPF to the First Asia-Pacific Water Summit



Rice paddy water is essential for broad-based agricultural and rural development under rapidly increasing/changing demand for food in the world, increased competition for water from all sectors and accelerating global climate change. Meeting the Millennium Development Goals in the region requires improving food security, alleviating poverty, maintaining biodiversity, conserving the environment and promoting appropriate water resource management.

In the Asian monsoon region, where more than half of the world's population lives, rice is the most important staple crop. Rice paddy water is not only vital for food production, but also provides a broad range of services related to society, culture and the ecosystem, making an essential contribution to water security, which is the main goal of the 1st Asia Pacific Water Summit.

The International Network for Water and Ecosystem in Paddy Fields (INWEPF), a network of paddy farming countries and international organizations would like to convey the following important message to the Summit

(Efficient and Sustainable Water Use for Food Security and Poverty Alleviation)

The improvement of irrigation facilities and water management is important in order to improve the productivity and efficiency of rice paddy agriculture. It is also necessary to take actions to address climate change such as drought and flood that has an enormous effect on water resource management and threatens the capacity of ecosystems.

Governments should provide necessary assistance (*e.g. policy, legal, financial and educational services and capacity building*) for adequate investment, modernization and efficient management of rice water systems, in order to achieve food security, to alleviate poverty and to conserve ecosystems. Such programs should be supported to complement farmers' initiatives and should be geared towards improving the performance of irrigation management taking account of regional characteristics.

Modernizing irrigation management to enhance the welfare of farming communities, multiple roles and environmental sustainability of irrigation will require substantial improvements in system governance, flexibility, and management capacity.

(Multifunctionality and Maintaining Ecosystems)

Rice paddy water supports multiple functions that provide for fish cultivation, flood control, ground water recharge and culture heritage, as well as promote the conservation and maintenance of ecosystems. Paddy-systems serve as artificial wetlands which have good potential for preserving and maintaining both human cultures and natural ecosystems in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, rice paddy systems provide important ecosystems service at the river basin.

The multiple uses, roles, values, services and other aspects of agricultural water in paddy farming regions should be recognized, evaluated and incorporated into objectives, plans and strategies of water resources development and management.

(Promotion of Participatory Irrigation Management)

Paddy water system depends on agricultural water infrastructure and integrated water management systems, some of which have been developed through long-term traditional wisdom and experiences of local communities and their participation since the start of human history.

On introducing participatory irrigation management, the traditional wisdom and experiences of local communities and the value of their participation in water planning and management should be fully elicited. In view of accelerating irrigation sector reforms, we call for a new generation of participatory management strategies, focusing on demand-driven and service-oriented approaches and professionalization of management at all levels. In addition, the institution which supports farmers' activities and the functional framework which actually promotes the activities are indispensable.