



Launch of **SAFI** – a network for Supporting African Farmer-led Irrigation Development



Background

Across Africa, increasing climatic variability and the uneven distribution and availability of both surface and subsurface water resources calls for further investment in water management in order to increase agricultural production. Recognising this, the **African Union's Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme** has promoted a review of irrigation policy by national governments which in turn gave rise to ambitious new national policies for irrigation investment. Currently, these policies are being implemented across the continent, yet many challenges remain in reaching the stated objectives. Looking beyond public irrigation investments to include private initiatives, **this research network aims to bring together public officials, technicians, private sector actors, donors, NGO representatives and researchers.** It aims to provide a platform to study and discuss ongoing dynamics and options in irrigation development in Africa, ranging from agribusinesses, public irrigation schemes and farmers' irrigation initiatives.

Report of the launch event

On **15-16 march 2019**, a gathering of more than 50 professionals in agriculture and irrigation, including government officials, donor representatives, NGOs, consultants and researchers, participated in **the launch event** of the network. **Participants came from across Africa: Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Sudan and Algeria;** and included representatives of governments and international organisations such as the African Union, the World Bank (WB), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and SNV. Among the participants were also consultants (WaterDev, Resilience, Penvey) and academic researchers from Tanzania (NM-AIST, University of Dar es Salaam), the UK (Manchester University, University of East Anglia), the USA (Ohio University), Sweden (Stockholm University) and the Netherlands (Wageningen University, Utrecht University).



Home-base and secretariat of the SAFI network

The **WISE – Futures African Centre of Excellence** at the **Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology**, Arusha, Tanzania, will act as the home-base for the SAFI-network. It will:

- Keep its network updated about ongoing research activities in relation to irrigation.
- Inform its members about research and professional opportunities in irrigation.
- Function as a platform for critical irrigation policy discussions and research.
- Organize seminars, trainings and conferences, when opportunities arise.
- Facilitate joint efforts for research and implementation programs.
- Collaborate with relevant partners (government, private sector, donors, NGOs, farmers).
- Provide network updates through the SAFI-website (www.safi-research.org).

Vision and mission

The aim of the SAFI network is to reposition farmer-led irrigation development as a recognized form of development. By means of research, training and advocacy, the network reaches out to irrigation engineers and agriculturalists in government departments, and to other development actors in the field.

Participation and membership

The SAFI network is an open network and welcomes all professionals who take an interest in agriculture and irrigation in Africa to participate. The goal is to create a professional network on African farmer-led irrigation development in order to share information and facilitate exchange between different actors.

Plan of action

The following plan of action will guide the activities of the network in the coming year (2019-2020):

- Formation of an executive group.
- Communication and regular updates to its members through the Secretariat and website.
- Promote film: “Farmer-led irrigation development in Mozambique”.
- Distribute one-minute infographic on African farmer-led irrigation development.
- Participation of network participants at key events in irrigation and agriculture, such as the Stockholm Water Week, WaterNet, and African Green Revolution Forum.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration and research on farmer-led irrigation development.
- Organize trainings and opportunities for education of irrigation professionals.