

Media Update

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FAO

PRESS RELEASE

FAO organizes workshops on accounting for water: boundaries, methodologies, and results.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations organized workshops on accounting for water: boundaries, methodologies, and results in both Lahore and Karachi on July 1 and 3, 2019 respectively to share the preliminary results, data issues and scope of the adopted technologies in different sectors.

Pakistan is facing increasing water demand in various sectors. The probability of hydrological emergencies and climate change impacts are high in the Indus Basin. In the emerging climate change scenario, sustainable planning for water and land resources must be based on reliable information and accurate demand-supply-production profiles at the management level.

FAO is currently implementing a water accounting project in the Indus basin in Pakistan. The project is multi-dimensional in its scope and introduces state of the art technologies to improve water and land databases. Using remote sensing (satellite images) and traditional approach, comprehensive water accounts are being carried out for 5 years. The Agriculture water accounting at each canal command includes estimation of actual water use from different sources, productivity of agriculture per unit land and water, and the secondary impacts of irrigation like aquifer depletion and drainage needs.

While the work carried out using Remote Sensing technology is based on satellite images, the traditional accounting is based on public sector data and information available at the provincial level. The data authenticating process will provide an opportunity to fill in the data gaps, add additional information



and an institutional scope to improve their current procedures and adopt new technology.

The water accounting results from the canal command, province and the basin levels will provide much needed water use, productivity and the water stress profiles for the whole basin. Dr. Robina Wahaj, senior land and water officer at FAO said, “As water becomes scarce in Pakistan, there is a pressing need for accounting for water, and not only water diversion, but how much water is actually used and consumed by different sectors and various crops in different areas within and outside irrigation systems. The preliminary results of FAO’s work is indicating that water used in Agri sector is less than 90%, much less than often quoted value of 95% and higher.”

Punjab minister for irrigation, Mohsin Leghari at the event in Lahore said, “Water accounting can provide the foundation upon which a future direction can be build, and serve as a course of action for improving water management and overcome the challenges facing the water sector in Pakistan.”

The presentations were well received especially by Irrigation & Agriculture departments & universities, which are undertaking Remote Sensing and Geographical Information System (GIS), based projects. Participants stressed the need for high quality and independent data.

FAO representative for Pakistan Mina Dowlatchahi also stressed that ‘Water accounting is the tool to ensure a coherent approach for overseeing overall water availability and sector destination in Pakistan. This is the first step towards the transformation of the irrigation sector and paradigm shift to water management. This is starting a required journey to ensure judicious management of water resources in the country.’

At the workshop in Karachi, special assistant to the chief minister Sindh for irrigation and modernization, Mr Ashfaque Memon stated that “Water scarcity is a crucial issue for Pakistan, and we have to manage our systems with that in mind. This workshop proved to be a mentoring exercise for all the water managers of the country, starting from accountability and auditing, we will move forward with FAO’s initiative and implement it into future course of action.”
