

The Global Diversity of Irrigation

For Achieving Sustainable Water Use and Forming Healthy Water Cycles

Explanation of the Report by the Planning Subcommittee
The Committee of Agricultural and Rural Development
The Council of Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas Policy (in MAFF)

**Supervised by the Project Planning Division
Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries**



Introduction

With growing worldwide concern over water-related problems, water for agriculture, the biggest user of freshwater, is now the subject of considerable debate.

This pamphlet explains the relevant issues in the debate, with a view to solving problems concerning water resources and agricultural water. Its content is based on the report "Global Water Resources and Agricultural Water in Japan", compiled in February 2003 by the Planning Subcommittee of the Committee of Agricultural and Rural Development of the Council of Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas Policy in Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In particular, this pamphlet sets out to demonstrate, firstly, that an awareness of the characteristics of irrigation - in other words, the diversity of irrigation in various regions - is the first step towards achieving sustainable use of water and healthy water cycles, and secondly, that it is important for each and every one of us to make self-determined efforts towards this goal.

What exactly is meant, then, by "diversity of irrigation"? To start with, the word "irrigation", or "*kanga*" in Japanese, refers to the act of "watering farmland in order to cultivate crops". It may be safe to say that the word "irrigation" is also used with the same meaning in French and other languages.

Etymologically, the English word "irrigation" is cognate with Latin "*rigate*", meaning "to moisten", and Old High German "*regan*", meaning "to rain".

The Japanese term "*kanga*", meanwhile, is compounded from the Han Chinese words "灌 (*kuan*)", meaning "to pour water copiously" or "to invoke deities by pouring liquor on the ground", and "溉 (*gai*)", meaning "to fill a container with water".

These words, used today to describe the act of "watering farmland in order to cultivate crops", therefore have different etymologies. "Irrigation" originally meant "moistening" or "raining", while "*kanga*" originally had the connotation of "copiously pouring water" or "filling with water".

This difference, in itself, eloquently bespeaks both the historical and cultural characteristics, i.e. diversity, of irrigation in each respective region.

Hopefully, this pamphlet will be of help in enhancing awareness of this diversity of irrigation among all parties concerned, as well as promoting self-determined efforts by all of us with a view to solving problems of global water resources and agricultural water.

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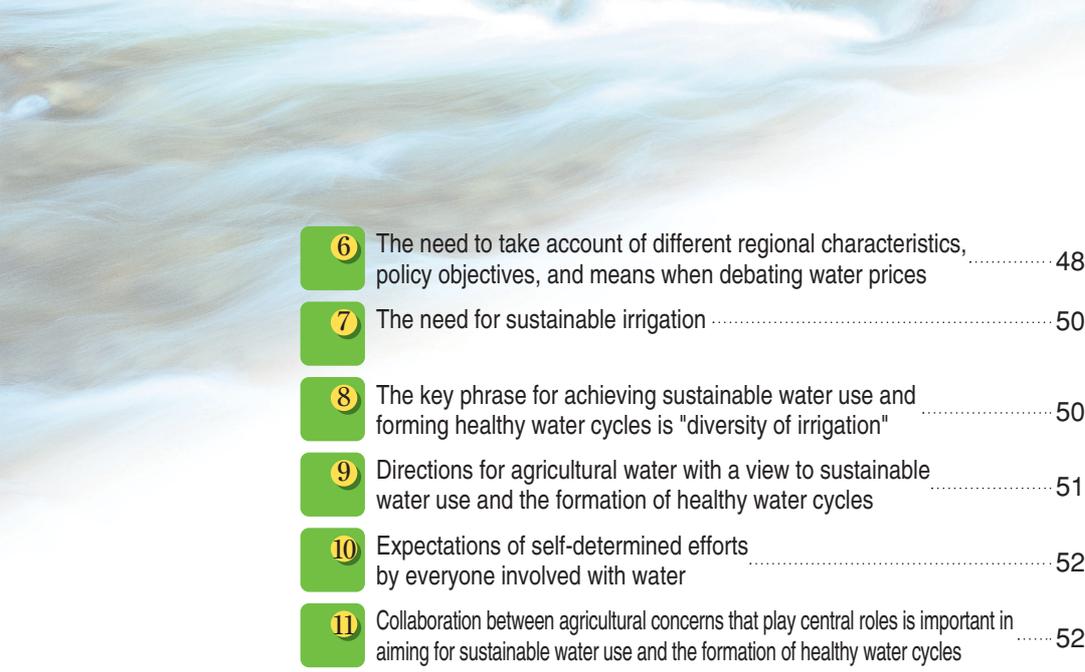
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