

PRESS RELEASE
Indus River System Authority (IRSA)
Ministry of Water Resources

Visit of IRSA's Technical Team to Australia
Regarding Further Development of Water Apportionment Accord (WAA) Tool

IRSA HQs, Islamabad, the 24th of March, 2023

The Indus Basin Irrigation System (IBIS) provides water, energy and food security for Pakistan and is under increasing pressure from population growth and climate change. Since 1993, the surface water resources of the Indus River have been shared by IRSA among the four provinces of Pakistan according to the 1991 Inter-Provincial Water Apportionment Accord (WAA). The water distribution process is a complex set of procedures which takes considerable time and person hours to fully execute at the start of each cropping season. For different scenarios, the process is often repeated adding even more time and effort on the part of IRSA technical personnel. Although common computer software like MS Excel is used as a tool to carry out some of the steps, the whole process is very time-consuming, disjointed and not automated.

2. Through a joint collaborative historical effort – conducted under the Australia-Pakistan Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on water management – including the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), IRSA, WAPDA, Provincial Irrigation Departments (PIDs), Australia's national science agency CSIRO and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), software to support pre-season water allocation planning (the WAA-Tool) was co-developed over a 4-year period from 2018 to 2022 and was formally handed over to the Pakistan government in December 2020. Since that date, the WAA-Tool has become the tool of choice by the stakeholders in Pakistan, and has been actively employed to aid in informed decision making for pre-season water allocation planning, operation of reservoir and river network and distribution of the water resources of the Indus River System between the provinces as per the policies of WAA 1991. The benefits accruing from using the Tool, made IRSA and the stakeholders to identify next steps required to sustain the investment: (1) continued and more intensive training of a wider audience; and (2) expanding its capability to incorporate mid-seasonal allocation planning processes, often required to respond to variable inflows and demand due to increasing climate variability.

3. Recognising the importance of water allocation for irrigated agriculture and the livelihoods of the millions of farmers living and working across the Indus Basin, ACIAR and CSIRO jointly organised and financed a study tour of IRSA's technical team to Australia from March 4-17, 2023, for technical exchange related to water planning operations and decision-making. IRSA team was comprised of Mr. Khalid Rana - Dir (Opr), Mr. Tahir Ali Khan - Programmer and Mr. Azam Khan - Research Assistant. During the visit, IRSA team had in-depth discussions with ACIAR, CSIRO and Australian water experts working for the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and state water departments on water allocation and irrigated agriculture water management. From these conversations, a new ACIAR-funded project is being scoped to support climate resilient and adaptive water allocation planning under WAA 1991 through the extension of the WAA-Tool to include mid-season planning capabilities. Key provincial stakeholders are also involved in the scoping and engaged with the IRSA and CSIRO team through online meetings during the study tour.

4. IRSA expressed its gratitude and appreciation for the study tour organised by the Australian government and sincerely hoped that the strong friendship already existing between the two commonwealth countries would further deepen in the future with similar initiatives.

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