

Small-scale irrigation can be defined as irrigation, usually on small plots, in which small farmers have the controlling influence, using a level of technology which they can operate and maintain effectively. Small-scale irrigation is, therefore, farmer-managed: farmers must be involved in the design process and, in particular, with decisions about boundaries, the layout of the canals, and the position of outlets and bridges. Although some small-scale irrigation systems serve an individual farm household, most serve a group of farmers, typically comprising between 5 and 50 households.

**Small-scale irrigation covers a range of technologies to control water from floods, stream-flow, or pumping:**

**Stream diversion (gravity supply)**

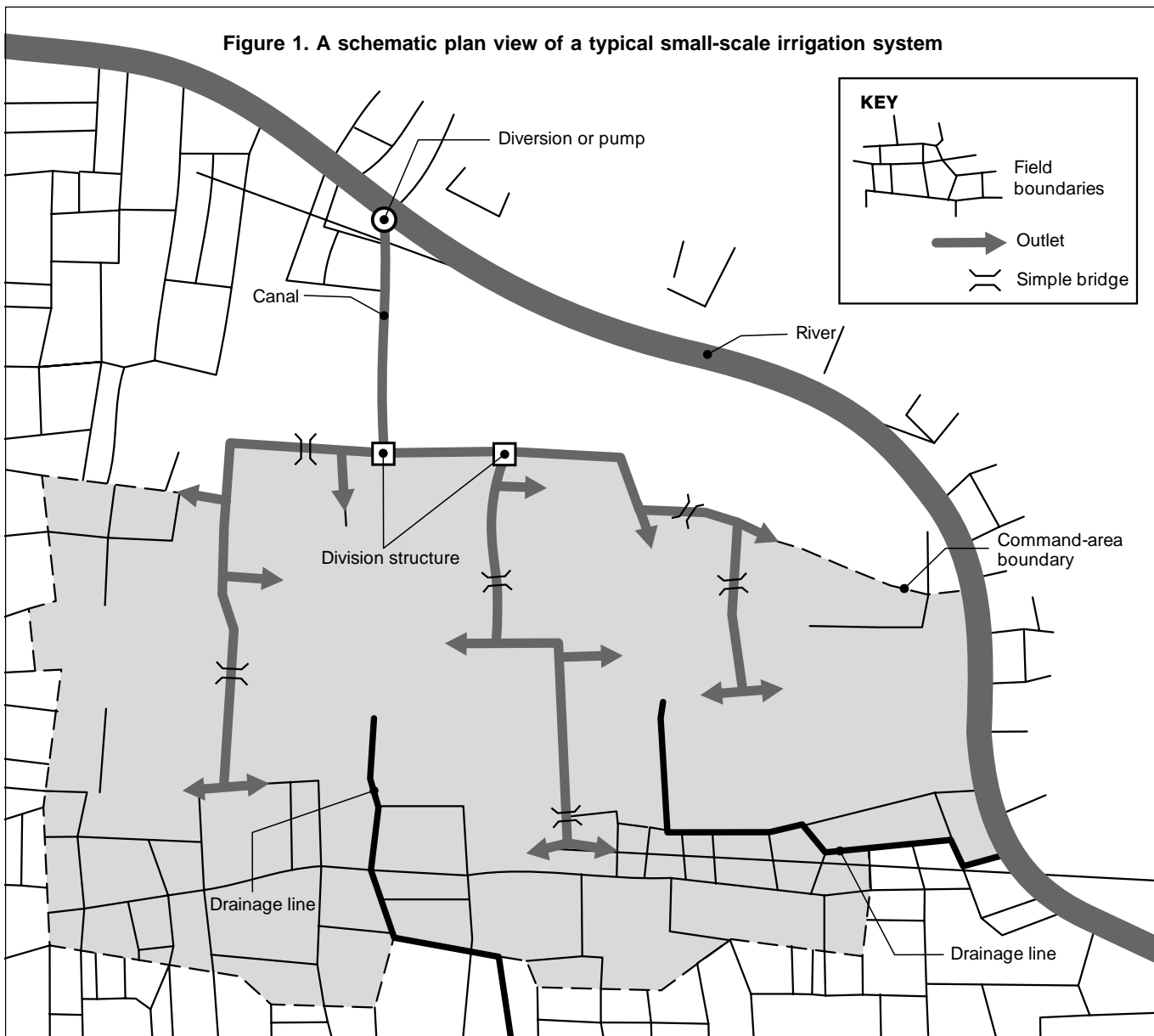
- Permanent stream diversion and canal supply.
- Storm spate diversion.
- Small reservoirs.

**Flood cropping**

- Rising flood cropping (planted before the flood rises).
- Flood/tide defence cropping (with bunds).

**Lift irrigation (pump supply)**

- From open water.
- From groundwater.





## Canal design

Water may be conveyed from the source to the field by unlined or lined canal; pipeline; or a combination of the two. The unlined canal is the most common method in use.

A typical cross-section of an unlined earthen canal for small-scale irrigation is shown in Figure 2. To minimize losses, the canal banks should be built from clayey soil and constructed in layers, with each layer compacted using heavy rammers.

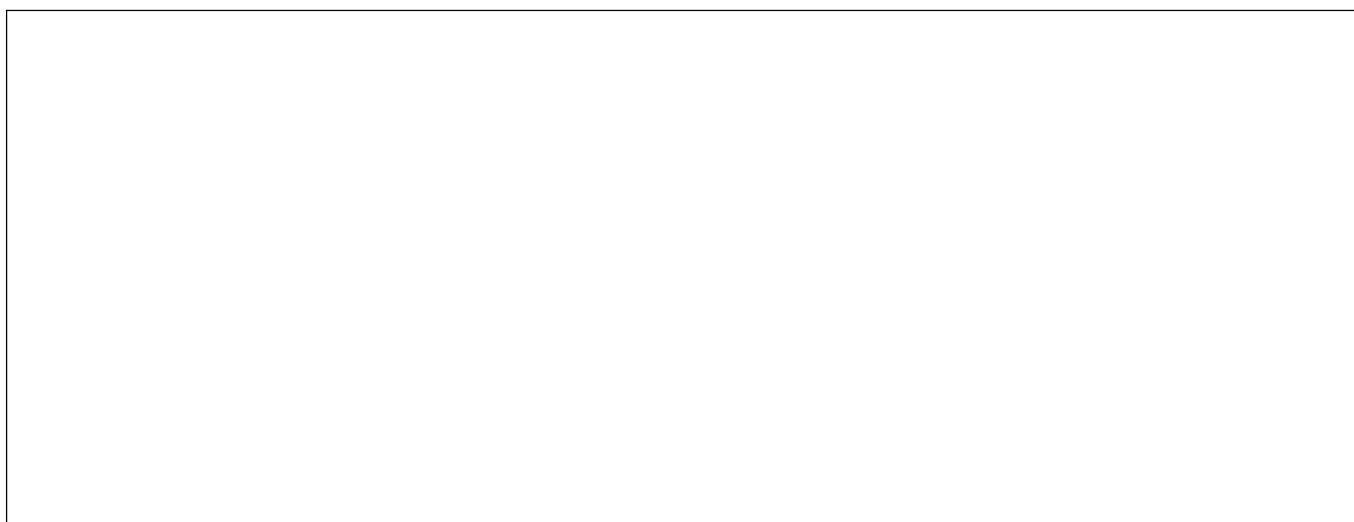
The required size of the canal can be decided using Manning's formula:

$$Q =$$

- Q = discharge (m<sup>3</sup>/s. Note: 1 m<sup>3</sup>/s = 1000 l/s)
- A = wetted area (m<sup>2</sup>)
- R = hydraulic radius (m)  
( = wetted area/wetted perimeter)
- s = slope (fraction)
- n = Manning's roughness coefficient  
(commonly taken as 0.03 for small irrigation canals)

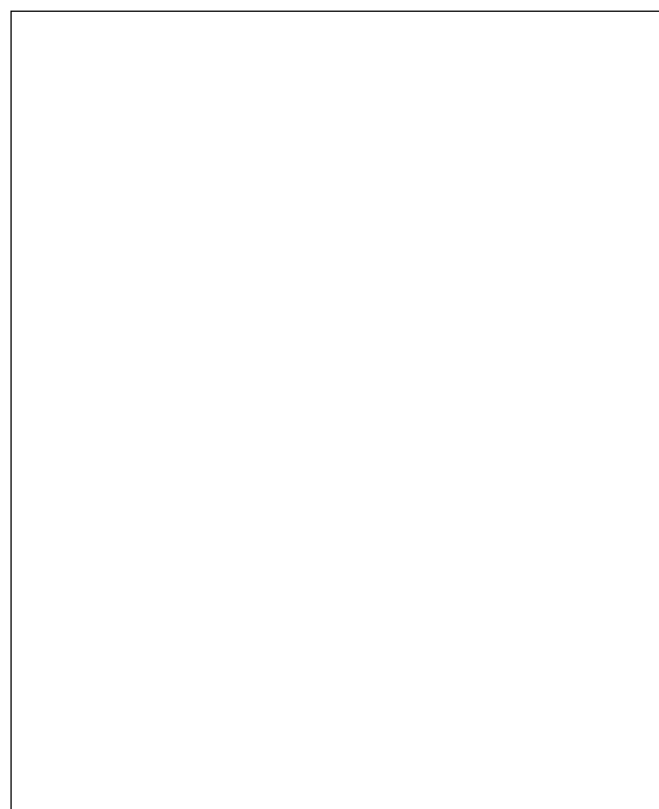
A design chart, such as Figure 3, can be used.

For example, for a trapezoidal canal in clay soil with side slopes of 1 to 1.5, a design discharge of 44 l/s, and a slope of 0.001 (or 1 m/km), use a bed-width (B) of 0.5 m, and a depth (D) of 0.25 m.



**Table 1. Evapotranspiration (ET<sub>o</sub>) in mm per day for different agro-climatic conditions (FAO, 1977)**

Regions	ET <sub>o</sub> in mm per day		
	<10°C	20°C	>30°C
<i>Mean daily temperature</i>			
<b>Tropics</b>			
Humid	3-4	4-5	5-6
Sub-humid	3-5	5-6	7-8
Semi-arid	4-5	6-7	8-9
Arid	4-5	7-8	9-10
<b>Sub-tropics</b>			
<i>Summer</i>			
Humid	3-4	4-5	5-6
Sub-humid	3-5	5-6	6-7
Semi-arid	4-5	6-7	7-8
Arid	4-5	7-8	10-11
<i>Winter</i>			
Humid - sub-humid	2-3	4-5	5-6
Semi-arid	3-4	5-6	7-8
Arid	3-4	6-7	10-11
<b>Temperate</b>			
Humid - sub-humid	2-3	3-4	5-7
Semi-arid - arid	3-4	5-6	8-9



## Distribution outlets

Outlets or division structures are used among a group of farmers. If the flow farmer can probably use it efficiently through one outlet, but larger flows need between several outlets. In either case outlets can be closed when not in use



Figure 1. Cast concrete circular gate and panel with outlet structure

### Further reading

- CLIMWAT for CROPWAT*, FAO Irrigation and Drainage Paper No. 49, FAO, Rome, 1982.
- Dupriez, H. and de Lathauwer, J., *Handbook of Water: Runoff, irrigation and drainage*, CTA/Terres et Vie/Macmillan, 1992.
- FAO, *Crop Evapotranspiration and Irrigation and Drainage Paper No. 56*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, 1989.
- Smout, I.K., *Telemetry for discharge measurements and estimates*, *Waterlines*, Vol. 9, No.3, IT Publications, London, 1980.
- Stern, P., *Soil Water and Salinity*, IT Publications, London, 1979.

Prepared

WEDC, Loughborough University, Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK  
wedc@lboro.ac.uk

