

## POLICY DIALOGUES

Bringing together policy objectives and data to improve water productivity



**Improving water productivity?** As water becomes increasingly scarce, governments are becoming more interested in the concept of water productivity to support efficient water use in alignment with their priorities of environment, equity, and economy. Yet determining if current water development activities are productive, and what alternative development directions may deliver, is not an easy task. It requires a new approach which brings together multiple policy objects and best available data (e.g., existing policies, remote sensing, yield and water data, agricultural water management, and land and water productivity) in a systemic way to analyse different uses of water and their potential impacts. Conducting policy dialogues that use this approach is one way to assess recent water productivity and develop ways to improve water productivity in the future.

**Why a dialogue?** Many valuable opinions and insights exist on how to be more productive with water in a particular region. Gathering these opinions in a policy dialogue is a useful way to get a deeper understanding of current and alternative policy directions. The dialogue should move beyond mere water productivity (for instance, “crop per drop” as a pure policy objective) and include more factors that play a role in decision making processes on new policies for water management, such as employment generation, energy blending targets, poverty alleviation, food sovereignty, and the environment. These factors are also closely related to geopolitical considerations, such as the willingness to become dependent on the import of staple crops and hence become vulnerable to export trade bans and price spikes. The productive use of water is only one of many factors to be considered in this policy dialogue. We aim to assist policy making processes by inviting participants to explore implications of various development strategies (e.g., development of new irrigation systems and small or commercial scale farming) for different priorities related to water productivity, which can then be used to drive changes in national policy.

## A policy dialogue has the following objectives:

- Create a setting to “freely” discuss implications of various policy alternatives for productive land and water use
- Stimulate learning on the many aspects of improving water productivity, the various interpretations of water productivity, and how to compare different sources of information relevant for water productivity
- Facilitate a meaningful discussion among participants driven by different sources of information (such as WaPOR biomass and evapotranspiration, socioeconomics, water governance, national policies, and trade-offs analyses)
- Learn from earlier and ongoing practice to improve water productivity and draw conclusions for policy-related decisions
- Generate insight on how productive a country or an area is with its water resources (crops, jobs, and income per drop), whether current policies still serve the latest priorities for land and water use, and indicate feasible strategies and management interventions at various levels to increase one or more forms of water productivity
- Identify possible opportunities for improvement in water management around tangible cases
- Bring people and different information sources together in a way that will have a longer-lasting impact for ministries, scientists, the private sector, and countries (bilateral collaboration)

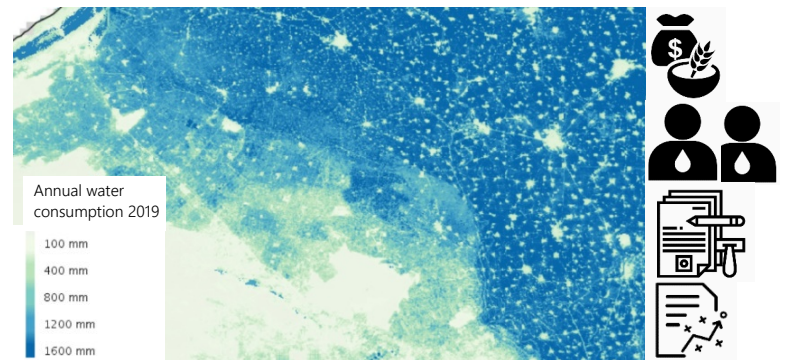
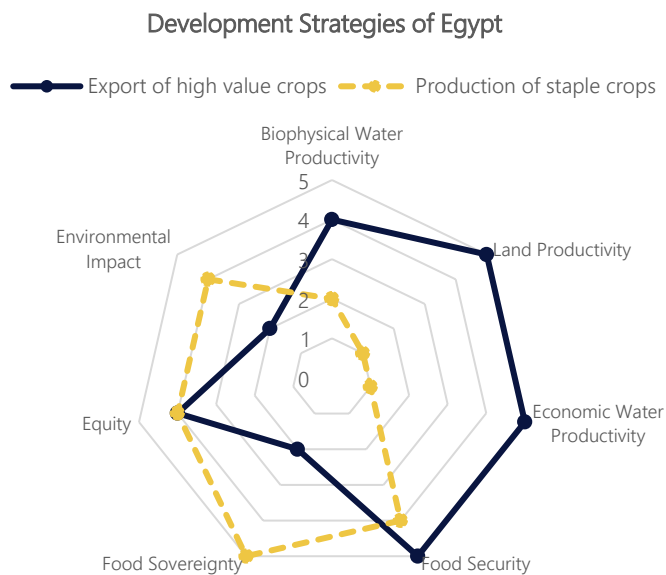


Figure 1 (left). Integrated assessment framework on different policy directions

Figure 2 (above). Different knowledge sources are brought together in a policy dialogue. Left side: remote sensing water consumption in and outside the main irrigation system of the western Nile delta (source: WaPOR database, actual evapotranspiration and interception for 2019, 100m resolution). Right side: trade-offs emerge when two development strategies are scored on different policy objectives.

## What to expect:

- Vibrant discussions on a meta-policy level about current and alternative policies and how they serve priorities for productive water use (Figure 1)
- Sharing conclusions on the “fitness” of existing policies and practices for productive water use and policy alternatives
- A better understanding of trade-offs of policies in relation to productivity, equity, and the environment
- Connecting new people and different analyses to gain insights on how to increase water productivity in practice (Figure 2)
- Country-specific policy briefs with recommendations how different policies link to different political priorities, and thus represent trade-offs, for decision-makers with analyses and recommendations in tangible cases
- A preliminary understanding on the scope (type of interventions) and size (changes in land & water use, institutions) in improving various forms of water productivity
- Follow up and engagement with the network of knowledge hubs, service hubs, and tools in Africa and Near East from the WaterPIP project and the 25% Alliance