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Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond. A 1986 **316**, 193-194

doi: 10.1098/rsta.1986.0001

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Chairman's introduction

BY J. HENNESSY

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I am honoured and privileged to be Chairman for the opening session of this Royal Society Discussion Meeting on Scientific Aspects of Irrigation Schemes.

It was originally intended that Dr Howard Penman, F.R.S., was to have been the Chairman for this session, but sadly he is no longer with us. However, his valuable work over many years at the Rothamsted Experimental Station on the physics of evaporation and the determination of the Penman equation lives on and is of continuing benefit to those concerned with irrigation development throughout the world.

First, I would like to stress the importance of the subject of this discussion meeting to industrial and developing countries alike, and offer the following estimates of areas under irrigation and drainage–flood protection worldwide in support of this view.

worldwide	{	irrigation 270 Mha
		drainage–flood protection 150 Mha
U.K.	{	irrigation 120 000 ha (projected to increase to 200 000 ha by 1990 A.D.)
		drainage 4 Mha

Secondly, irrigation development – the end-product of which is enhanced agricultural production, whether food or industrial crops – requires the fully multidisciplinary approach so that sustained success may be realized. Perhaps above all other development sectors, the human factor – for example, the socio-economic aspects of farmer participation and motivation – is of greater importance here than in other multidisciplinary production activities.

Thus it is entirely fitting that the Royal Society is giving attention to the irrigation sector and we shall see that multidisciplinary aspects are widely covered in the programme for this meeting.

At international level the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (I.C.I.D.) is the forum for the exchange of research information and first-hand experiences between the 80 member countries, covering all principal irrigation zones worldwide. It is thus very fitting that the I.C.I.D. President Honoraire Rangeley is with us, together with a number of chairmen, past and present, of the British National Committee of I.C.I.D. We shall hear their views in their presentations to this meeting.

Regarding multinational funding agencies, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the E.E.C., the F.A.O., and others have given significant attention to irrigation and drainage research and development in developing countries since their inception. Here in the U.K., the O.D.A., M.A.F.F., the Research Councils, the universities, and industry all give increasing attention to irrigated production of food and industrial crops. In addition, the Fellowship of Engineering has, over the past 20 months, convened the Work Team to review research activities in the U.K. pertaining to irrigation and drainage.

I must also mention Mr K. K. Framji of India, who has been the Secretary General of I.C.I.D. for more than 20 years and has just been awarded the 1985 Onassis Foundation Olympia Prize for his worldwide contribution to irrigation and drainage.

This constructive support and attention to the sector is entirely appropriate – indeed vital – for the well-being of many millions of people. It is therefore fitting that the meeting should open with a consideration of the world scene in irrigation.