

Smallholder irrigation schemes in South Africa: A review of knowledge generated by the Water Research Commission

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Abstract

The status and characteristics of the 302 smallholder irrigation schemes found in South Africa are discussed and knowledge on South African smallholder irrigation schemes generated by the Water Research Commission (WRC) over a period of nearly 20 years is reviewed. Themes covered include planning, design and technology; plot-holders and their livelihoods; institutions and organisations; support services; agronomic practices; and revitalisation. The availability of guidelines on most of these aspects is highlighted. Gaps in the knowledge of social, human and economic aspects of smallholder irrigation schemes are pointed out.

Keywords: smallholder, irrigation scheme, plot size, technology, livelihoods, farmer support, institutions, organisations, revitalisation, management