

[Innovation of the Week: Funding a Blue Revolution](#)

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As climate change worsens, and fresh water availability grows more erratic, the food security of small-scale farmers throughout Africa will increasingly depend on their water management abilities. Luckily, the tools for improving water management already exist. But, as a recent [report](#) from the [Rockefeller Foundation](#) notes, the key to getting these tools to the people who need them the most will be making sure that the funding, donor, and policy-making community understands what they are and why they need more support.

As climate change worsens, and fresh water availability grows more erratic, the food security of small-scale farmers throughout Africa will increasingly depend on their water management abilities. (Photo credit:Bernard Pollack)

There are many examples of simple and inexpensive ways of improving water management for small-scale farmers and the report highlights a number of them. Increased investment in small holder irrigation, for example, creates greater diversity of water source options, such as small streams, shallow wells, boreholes, and rainwater storage, and gives farmers and small communities' autonomy over their water sources. Low technology irrigation methods are also cost-efficient, such as surface irrigation systems like furrows and small basins, pressurized systems such as sprinklers and drip, and water lifting technologies which can be driven by gravity, manual labor, and motorized pumps.

On the ground, there are countless groups working to help farmers improve water management techniques and gain access to improved water management technologies. Many of these organizations will be highlighted in *State of the World 2011: Innovations that Nourish the Planet* as deserving of more resources and funding from the donor and policy making community in order to alleviate global hunger and poverty.

In Accra, Ghana the [International Water Management Institute](#) (IWMI), a non-profit organization working in Asia and Africa to improve water and land management for farmers and the environment, received funding from several groups, including the [Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research](#) (CGIAR) initiative [Challenge Program for Water and Food](#), to work with urban farmers in Ghana to develop improved farm wastewater management. Because of lack of alternate options, farmers often use wastewater to irrigate their crops and clean their vegetables. But IWMI is working to help these farmers clean the water they have, as well as conserve it, improving sanitation, crop yields and livelihoods.

In Zambia, [International Development Enterprises](#) (IDE), an organization working to improve the livelihoods of farmers in Asia and Africa through improved agricultural technology and market access, is helping families improve their livelihoods, eat balanced meals, and afford

education for their children with a single technology: a [treadle pump](#). The pump makes irrigating larger pieces of land easier and improves crop yields, allowing farmers to diversify and increase their harvest, and increasing a surplus that can be sold at local markets for a profit. (See also: [Access to Water Improves Quality of Life for Women and Children](#))

And in Ethiopia, a [farmer-priest](#) named Kes Malede Abreha was able to develop a water management system on his farm with the help of funding from the global, NGO-initiated organization, [Prolinnova](#). His system has allowed his family to move from a one room house to a larger home where he is now able to grow a diversity of crops, and raise, chickens, cattle goats, and bees. (See also: [Persistently Innovative: One Farmer Teaches by Example](#))

He is also showing farmers in the community how small investments in technology, like those outlined in the Rockefeller report, can go a long way to improving a family's quality of life.

To read more about innovations that improve small-scale farmer water management see: [Getting Water to Crops](#), [Water Harvesting](#), [Slow and Steady Irrigation Wins the Race](#), and [Weathering the Famine](#).