

FROM THE SPHERE OF SCIENCE

On the course of the 19th European Regional Conference of International Commission for Irrigation and Drainage (ICID)

At the beginning of June 2001 the Congress Centre in Brno hosted delegates of the 19th Regional Conference of International Commission for Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) that was held again in the Czech Republic after 31 years. Under the patronage of the minister of agriculture the conference was organised by the Czech Committee of ICID. Beside the main conference under the support of FAO (Organisation for Nutrition and Agriculture OON) two workshops were devoted to irrigation and drainage of agricultural soils were performed in Prague in post-communist countries of central and east Europe.

All sessions, varied by the number of auditorium in presented issues, had the main common theme "Sustainable utilisation of soils and water". In total there were 200 delegates from 27 countries and more than 70 spoken contributions that are at disposal on CD-ROM issued on the occasion of conference. 40 posters were presented on the conference.

In post-communist countries of central and East Europe, in which irrigation and drainage were state-subsidised (and mostly regardless to ownership and protection of environment) in the past, the interest in this equipment is now falling. Its privatisation takes place somewhere, somewhere else the state is still engaged. Mostly, however, only a fraction of built irrigation systems is utilised and their maintenance and reconstruction are neglected. The effect of these systems on environment (both positive and negative) is not publicly known in a sufficient degree.

Irrigation and drainage belong to cultural country and they have a non-negligible meaning even under new economic conditions. They play their role in the social development of countryside and maintenance of the landscape. They are inseparable component of complex management with water resources, as comprehended by the legislation of the European Union (particularly Skeleton Water-management Regulation).

The delegates of the conference agreed that extensive technological innovations based on multidisciplinary approach and international co-operation are necessary. Drainage technology may be well utilised to controlled revitalisation of water riverbeds and soft wet lands.

Delegates admitted that financial subsidy of the state to keepers and users of irrigation and drainage system to such a degree like in the past is unsatisfactory. The costs invested have to return regularly, i.e. they must be in-

vested particularly those who make direct or indirect profit from irrigation and drainage. In the transitional period when private agricultural sector is weak in some countries and should not be maintained without subsidies, help of the state and transnational institutions is desirable.

A great attention has been devoted to the systems of anticipation and alleviation of consequences of extreme hydrological events, such as floods, droughts and soil erosions. The conference emphasised the need to deal more with immediate practical issues, e.g. co-operation with insurance companies and general increase preparedness to control extreme events. Global changes of the climate make these problems more urgent.

In addition, delegates emphasised that the European Union approved many guidelines to protect quantity and quality of water resources. To provide their efficiency the system of analytical and management instruments, based on measurement and modelling of complicated processes, is necessary. Some such instruments and their applications were demonstrated on the conference. Water and soil protection is, however, sophisticated and expensive matter and there is no need to be afraid of searching for unconventional solution.

In conclusion of the conference that like our workshops to our sincere delight met in the special and laic public with very favourable reaction, many subject-matters for future common projects were discussed, where main subject-matters were: complex management of regions affected by surface mining of minerals, rebuilding and modernisation of irrigation systems, information and educational security of applications of EU guidelines and optimal utilisation of drainage system in water management of small water basins.

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