In different States of the Country, especially in Kerala State, the direct responsibility of the Irrigation Department, which constructs, operates and maintains irrigation projects, ends with the supply of water to the outlets. Conveying water from there to the individual fields is the responsibility of the farmers. But the space between the farmers' field and the outlets remains to be a "no man's land", ignored by the Irrigation Department and the farmers. Consequently, farmers fail to convey and utilise water effectively. It has now been recognised that canal irrigation will be possible only when the distribution system up to cultivators' field are maintained properly and the maintenance and upkeep of the system will not be possible by the Government machinery without the active involvement and support of the farmers. Experiences elsewhere show that wherever farmers actively participate in irrigation management activities, marked improvements in water utilisation and in productivity are noticed. But, until recently, farmers were not given any chance for involvement in irrigation management in India. This has ultimately resulted in the underutilisation and misutilisation of the available irrigation potential and in low yield.

Organised efforts in the participation of farmers in irrigation management in Kerala started with the establishment of the Command Area Development Authority (CADA) in mid eighties. CADA is expected to focus on the utilisation and development of the irrigation water below outlets, with the active involvement of farmers of the respective areas. It has formed more than 2000 farmer associations in the 10 completed irrigation projects of Kerala. These associations form the base level structure of the three-tier system instituted by CADA for ensuring the participation of farmers in irrigation management. Canal Committee, which is constituted of officials of concerned agencies and the presidents of farmer associations in a major branch canal command is the second tier, and the Project Committee, which is constituted of officials and representatives of canal committees in the Project area is the upper tier. In spite of all these institutions, it has been found that the

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intended results are not obtained from the participation of farmers in irrigation management. In fact, many of the farmer associations tend to cease functioning immediately after their formation. It is in this light the present study has been conducted, basically to find out the reasons for the present low level of participation of farmers in irrigation management and to suggest measures for ensuring sustained participation of farmers. A comprehensive study has been carried out in the command area of Neyyar Irrigation Project, situated in the southern part of Kerala State, covering a wide cross section of farmers and officials.

Details and results of the study are furnished in seven Chapters. Introductory Chapter is followed by Chapters on Farmer Participation in Irrigation Management: An Overview and the Procedure adopted in the study. The analysis of the data collected from the field and the results are given in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, dealing with Respondents and Perceptions, Command Area Development and Factors Influencing Participation, respectively. Major findings of the study and Suggestions are furnished in the last Chapter. References pertaining to each Chapter are given at the end of the respective Chapters and a detailed Bibliography is also provided. Tables and Figures are given along with the text. Copy of interview schedules used for the survey are given in Appendix 1 and 2.

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