

Water, Food, Energy (Ecosystems): Translating Concepts into Policies for All Sectors

India International Water Week

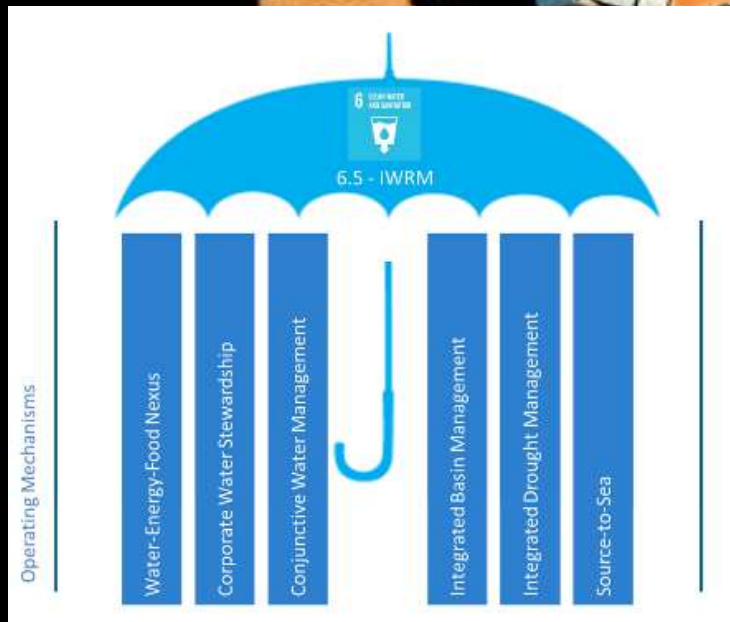
*Dr Mark Smith
Director General*

September 22, 2026



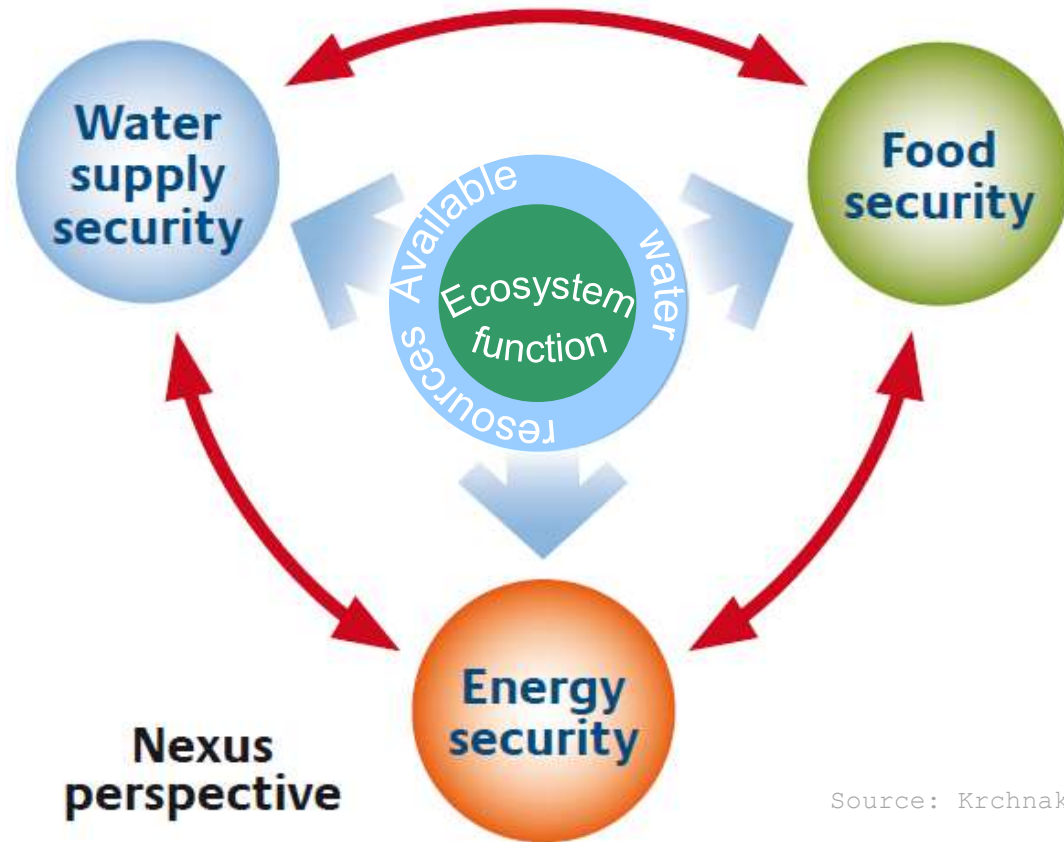
Integrated Management of Water

IWRM is a process which promotes coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems



Source: Smith & Jønch Clausen. 2018. World Water

Putting Nature in the Nexus



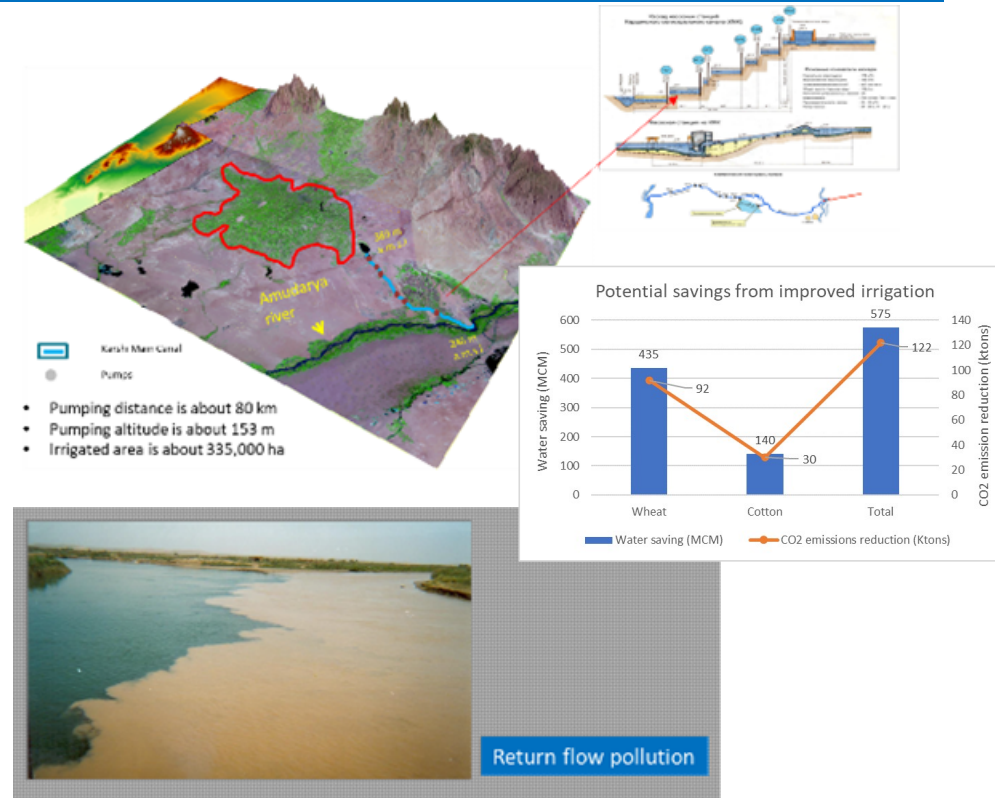
Source: Krchnak, Smith & Deutz. 2011

WEFE Nexus – Adopting a Problem-Focus

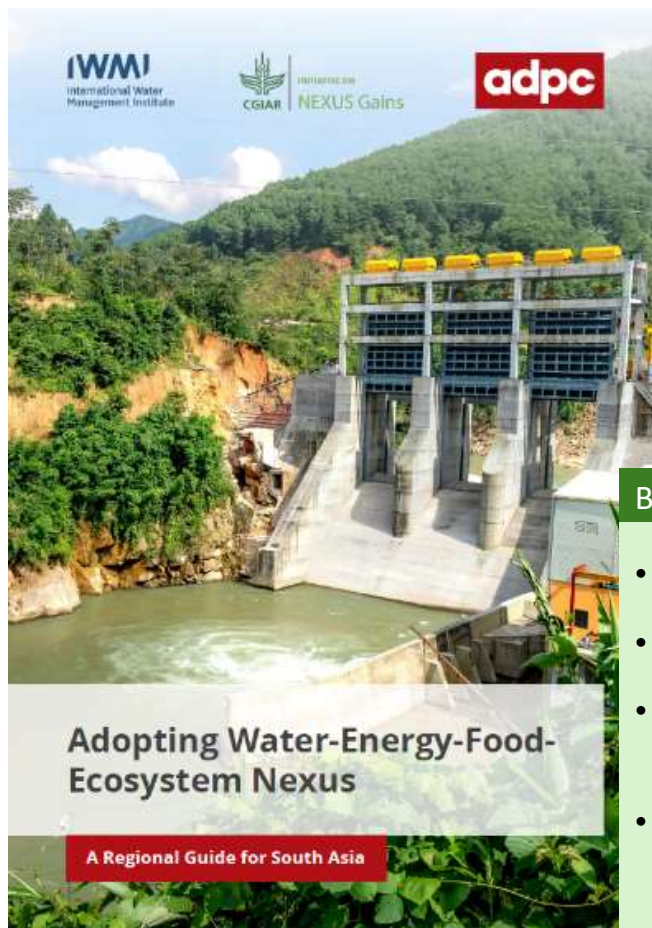
Solar-powered Irrigation, India



Cutting Water, Energy, Carbon and



Cross-sectoral Collaboration – Joint Action and Innovation



- Actors come together to solve problems – joint action and innovations to address diverse interests
- Joint work on systems change – not in sector silos
- Integrated institutional frameworks: inter-ministerial coordination, inter-sectoral task forces
- Participatory multi-stakeholder platforms

Best Practice Example: Mahaweli Development Programme, Sri Lanka

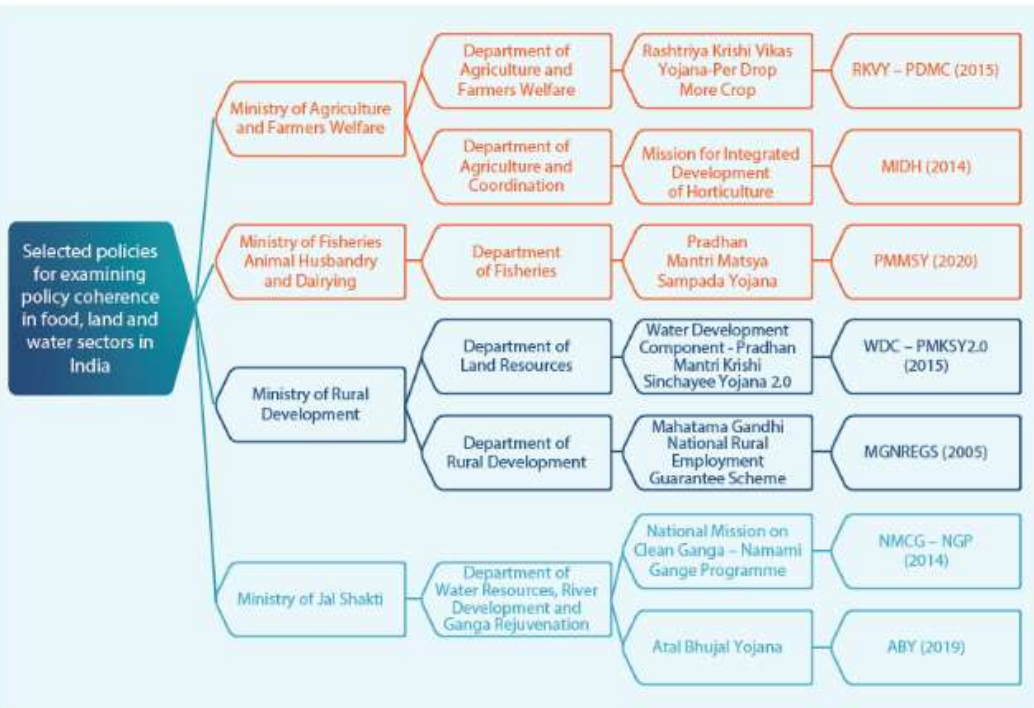
- Inter-agency committees: irrigation, agriculture, energy, environment
- Shared data platform and scenario planning
- Stakeholder forums: farmers, local government, private sector co-design water management
- Implementation: water productivity, coordination of water releases, hydropower scheduling, environmental flows, flood and drought forecasting

Source: Holmatov et al. 2025. IWMI and ADPC.

Strengthening Policy Coherence



Evaluating Policy Coherence in Food, Land, and Water Systems: Evidence from India



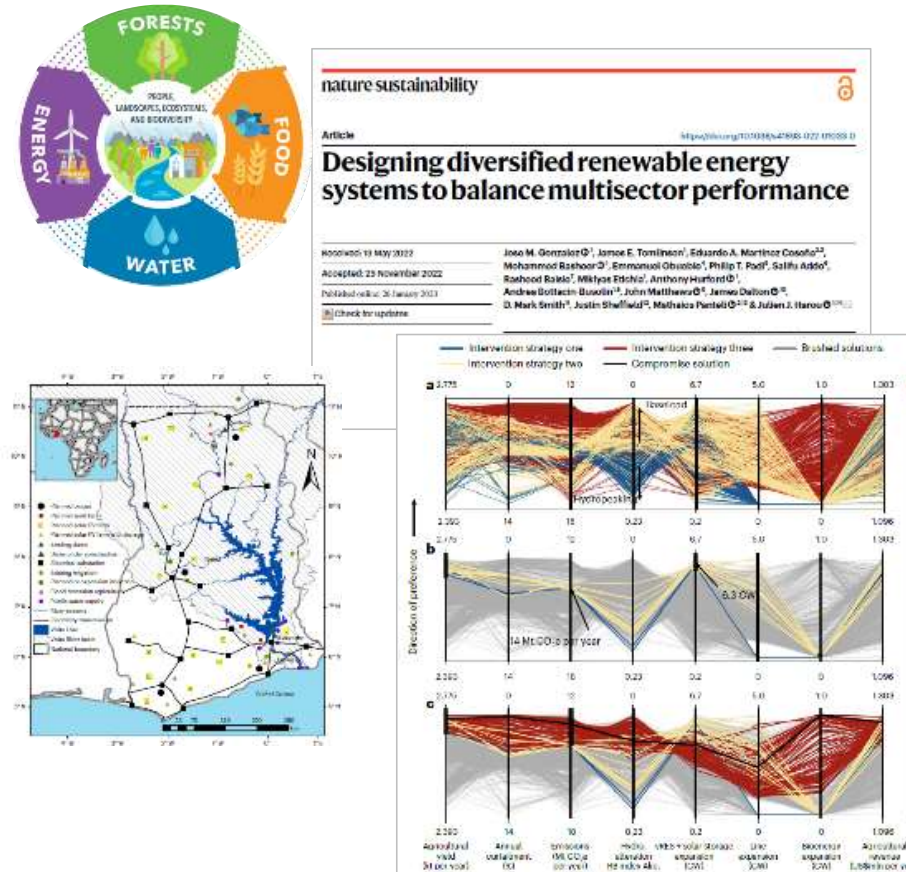
Unlocking Policy Coherence – Lessons from India

- Horizontal and vertical institutional coherence
- External consistency between policies
- Scope for enabling convergence
- Mechanisms for flexibility and adaptability
- Social inclusion

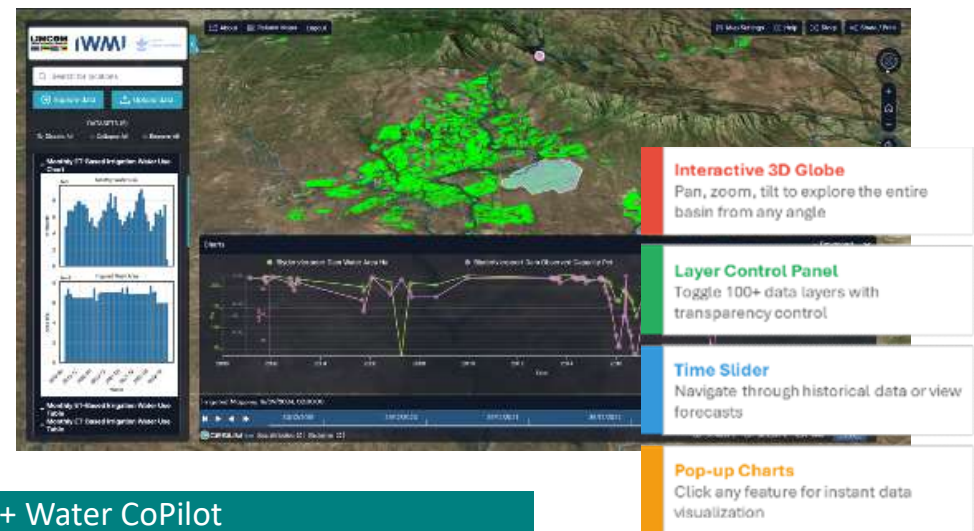
Policy coherence is a dynamic process, not a prescription

New Power of System Analytics

Volta Basin



Basin Digital Twin Technology



+ Water CoPilot



Conclusions – Water, Food, Energy, Ecosystems

- Building blocks for integration
 - Policies with dynamic convergence to build coherence
 - + new analytics to make visible and accessible insights for trade-offs, scenarios
 - + empowering institutions (horizontally and vertically) to align action on joint, systems problems
- Unlock for joint planning, joint investment
 - Sequenced corridor investments
- Vision is systems-driven, dynamic policy landscape – not static sectoral pillars
- UN Water Conference 2026
 - Proposed “Water policies for all sectors” Flagship
 - Harnessing key drivers: problem focus, dynamic policy convergence, new analytics, empowering institutions for joint action

