

4.12 Water Use (Irrigation)

Ned Dwyer

Fresh water is used for agriculture, industrial and household activities. Globally, agriculture, and in particular irrigation, is the largest water-use sector, accounting for approximately 70% of all water withdrawn from rivers, lakes and the ground. Water use for agriculture in Ireland is limited to some early crop potatoes and vegetables grown under cover, mainly in the east and southeast. Monitoring of water use for agricultural purposes is important for appropriate water management and for understanding the effects of climate change on food production.



Photo: © Brian Barrett

Measurements

No measurements of water use for irrigation are made in Ireland. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has made an estimate of possible usage based on land-cover maps and on reports by the Central Statistics Office of potato crop acreage in 2000.

Time-series and Trends

The FAO estimates of the maximum possible irrigated area are based on Central Statistics Office reports of potato crop acreage and crops grown in plastic tunnels for 2000. It is estimated that an area of approximately 1100 ha, representing less than 1% of the total cultivated area of the country, is irrigated.

‘It is estimated that less than 1% of the total cultivated area of the country is irrigated.’

Maintaining the Observations

Irrigation needs may change in the future with changes in precipitation patterns. However monitoring of water usage in all sectors should be carried out and coordinated given its impact on the hydrological cycle.

Further Information and Data Sources

FAO's Information System on Water and Agriculture:
<http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/main/index.stm>