



# Abstracts

## Jean Philippe Venot - Straw Technology: Understanding the Myth of Drip Irrigation

### Authors

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### Body

This paper explores the processes through which a pluralistic drip irrigation myth has been created. At its simplest, drip irrigation is the slow and frequent application of water to the root zone of crops via a network of perforated plastic pipes. Most scientific and policy documents ascribe the capacity to produce efficiency, productivity, modernity, and fairness to the drip irrigation hardware. By doing so, they see technology as existing independently from the environment in which it is being developed and used. We adopt another definition of technology as a combination of hardware, actors and practices to unravel the complex relationships between technology and society. This not only allows to appreciate how drip irrigation has emerged as a mediating technology but also to critically engage with such notion, which, we argue, is another form of closure. A wide coalition of international and national development organizations, policy makers, drip irrigation manufacturers, NGOs and influential spokespersons are shaping a pluralistic and geographically embedded myth of drip irrigation as a modern, efficient, sustainable and fair solution to today's world water, food and poverty challenges. This myth persists because it allows for reinforcing the values and interests of specific actors. We highlight the key role of engineers who legitimize the 'drip myth' by heralding the technical potential of drip irrigation hardware, and link the resonance drip irrigation has acquired to the increased importance of private sector actors in the agriculture sector, which is increasingly seen as business-venture to be taken up by investor-entrepreneur farmers.

### Sessions

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