

Method of the Study

Most OTA studies rely on outside experts to guide the study, suggest topics for special emphasis, provide specially tailored research summaries, and review staff work. Separate but sometimes overlapping groups filled each of these roles in this assessment (table D-1). An advisory panel provided overall guidance throughout the course of the assessment. A number of planning workshops and working group meetings were held to address more specific topics and several reviewers examined the draft assessment. Other OTA studies have used similar groups but the number of people involved in this assessment was larger than average.

This assessment also was unusual in its strong regional focus. Staff from OTA made extensive site visits throughout the West, many meetings were held in the region, and outside experts were almost exclusively drawn from Western States.

Phase 1: Planning

Preliminary meetings were held while OTA staff visited private sector, academic and government experts in 12 of the 17 Western States. Three planning workshops, in Denver, Salt Lake City, and Berkeley, provided additional background information and identified important issues. Many of the

colleagues who took part in these initial sessions participated throughout the 2-year assessment.

The advisory panel had its first meeting 2 months after the assessment began. Its 19 members included farmers, ranchers, scientists, government officials and representatives from private industry and public interest groups. Dr. James Kendrick, Jr., Vice President for Agriculture and University Services, University of California-Berkeley, chaired the panel. Members discussed the general format and scope of the study and advised that OTA form several working groups to analyze issues in more detail.

Four working groups (one each on rangeland, irrigation, dryland agriculture, and social sciences) were formed and met 1 month later. Each group identified several topics for contractors' reports, completed detailed outlines of each topic, and suggested several potential authors.

Phase 2: Commissioning and Evaluating Contractors' Reports

Working group and advisory panel members helped to recruit contractors and, in some cases, also served as authors. Fifteen major papers were

Table D-1.—Assessment Meetings

Group	Date	Location	Members attending
Advisory Panel:			
Meeting 1	Oct. 22-23, 1981	Washington, DC.	18
Meeting 2	May 26-27, 1982	Washington, D.C.	18
Meeting 3	Oct. 28-29, 1982	Washington, D.C.	18
Meeting 4	Mar. 29-30, 1983	Washington, D.C.	18
Planning Workshops:			
Drylands	Sept. 11, 1981	Denver, Colo.	11
Rangelands	Sept. 18, 1981	Salt Lake City, Utah	10
Irrigation	Sept. 25, 1981	Berkeley, Calif.	11
Work groups:			
Meeting 1:			
Rangelands	Nov. 19-20, 1981	Washington, D.C.	7
Drylands	Nov. 12-13, 1981	Washington, D.C.	7
Irrigation	Nov. 23-24, 1981	Washington, D.C.	8
Social Science	Dec. 7-8, 1981	Denver, Colo.	11
Meeting 2:			
Rangelands	Apr. 26, 1982	Denver, Colo.	7
Drylands	Apr. 27, 1982	Denver, Colo.	7
Irrigation	Apr. 29, 1982	Denver, Colo.	8
Social Science	Apr. 28, 1982	Denver, Colo.	11

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commissioned and six smaller ones were contributed without contractual arrangements. The authors met with corresponding working group members during the second meeting. Draft papers were reviewed and suggestions made for final versions. The second meeting of the advisory panel evaluated the results of the working group reviews and provided additional comments for the authors. Final copies of the contractor's reports were completed at the midpoint of the assessment and served as important source materials.

Phase 3: Preparing the OTA Assessment

The meetings of the authors, working groups, and advisory panel provided OTA with clear indications of strengths and weaknesses of the assessment's draft organization and background information. As a result, the assessment was reorganized to follow the hydrologic cycle instead of agricultural land uses. In some cases, it was necessary to research and synthesize additional information from the scientific literature or to bring in special-

ists to fill significant gaps. Extensive staff work was done during preparation of the first assessment draft to complete these tasks.

The advisory panel reviewed the first draft of OTA's work during its third meeting, reaffirmed the desirability of the hydrologic cycle format, and suggested modifications. These changes were made before the draft was sent to about 50 independent reviewers from a wide range of organizations. The external review process was finished by the time of the fourth and final advisory panel meeting 2 months before the assessment was due for delivery to the OTA Congressional Board. Discussions at the final meeting focused on the major findings of the assessment and policy options for Congress.

The results of this assessment are presented in two documents. This volume contains the full assessment of domestic issues. A smaller background paper, "Water Related Technologies for Sustainable Agriculture in Arid/Semiarid Lands: Selected Foreign Experience, " was also prepared. It presents six case studies of innovative foreign practices that may have important wider applications for sustainable agriculture in arid/semiarid lands.