

# ONLY 6% OF AFRICA'S FARMLAND IS IRRIGATED; CHANGING IT WILL BRING FOOD SECURITY TO HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

Imagine a professional basketball player wearing sneakers only 6% of the time. Or an international banking chain, with only 6% of the branches having a safe.

Strange, right? Although these are absurd, hard-to-imagine scenarios, this is precisely the situation in a much more substantial and fundamental field: the agriculture sector in Africa, with only 6% of farmlands across the continent receiving proper irrigation. Currently relying on rainwater or manual irrigation, the sector's productivity is considered to be the lowest in the world.



## A DRAMATIC EFFECT

6% is the official number across the continent, but a deeper dive into the data reveals a particularly bleak reality. While in Sub-Saharan Africa only 4% of agricultural land is irrigated, in the northern continent the figure is 28%, with over two-thirds of agricultural areas equipped with irrigation systems located in only five countries (Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, South Africa, and Madagascar).

Most African farmers rely on rainwater, often irregular and rarely sufficient, or on existing water sources (many in the form of rainwater pools) often containing polluted water, which may cause serious damage to the field and crops, and later on to those consuming the crops.

In terms of food security, local farming plays a key role. But although 70-80% of the local population of the working age are smallholder farmers, agriculture in the region is far from being sufficient, and the continent currently spends more than \$35 billion on food imports per year.

The effect of irrigation systems on the crop has been dramatic and known for many years. It is estimated that land that is irrigated regularly yields twice or more crops than land irrigated by rain and manual irrigation alone: the crops are higher, the amount increases, and the season lengthens. The extremely low 6% is causing low efficiency, leaving millions hungry and without income.



