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Using IT to break new ground in agriculture

By Asma Ali Zain

DUBAI — The International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (Icarda), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, organised a seminar yesterday to discuss the way information technology (IT) can help farmers make viable use of agricultural water for their crops. The seminar was addressed by Dr Ian McCann, Irrigation and Water Management Specialist, University of Delaware, USA.

Dr McCann discussed the ways IT can help spread information to farmers, municipalities, government agencies and private companies. "Utilising water efficiently cannot be possible until and unless other

components that affect it are at work," he said.

A comprehensive method has to be worked out which would provide information regarding proper utilisation of the irrigation water to small farmers, proper dissemination of the information and getting people together to present information easily, he added.

Speaking to *Khaleej Times*, Dr McCann said that in future, IT will help provide information about the utilisation of water for a certain crop to small farmers on their mobiles.

Elaborating, Dr McCann said that a simple approach of using irrigation water more efficiently is by developing an irrigation schedule and management strategies so that the

wastage of water is minimised.

He said wastage of water can occur as a result of many factors, which include poor irrigation scheduling besides poor maintenance and operation of irrigation equipment.

He further said that several models were available, such as an automated weather station that helps collect data required to estimate potential water supply and make all the calculations necessary for irrigation.

Dr McCann said that the regional networking mechanism that maximises the collaboration among researchers and scientists in the Arabian Peninsula can also help in exchange of knowledge, information and expertise, both regionally and internationally.