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Recent experience confirms that participation of farmers in managing parts of an irrigation system and collecting water charges usually results in a more efficient use of water. To be effective, farmers in the hydraulic unit would need to organize themselves by establishing a 'water users' association. This paper presents a comparative study of the legal framework for these associations in Colombia, India, Mexico, Nepal, the Philippines, and Turkey. Building on the theory that participation of farmers in managing and operating parts of an irrigation system will result in an optimum use of water, the document analyzes in a comparative manner how each of these countries addressed the basic aspects related to the establishment and functioning of such associations. Additional emphasis is placed on the collection of water charges.