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Nestle, SABMiller See World Water Week as Far From a Washout

Posted by [Sheila Shayon](#) on September 4, 2012 03:16 PM



"If something isn't given a value, people tend to waste it. Water is our most useful resource, but those using it often don't even cover the costs of its infrastructure," said Nestlé CEO Paul Bulcke, speaking in Stockholm for 2012 [World Water Week](#), which [concluded](#) Friday.

The key issues this year: water and food security, followed by partnerships, tools and data. The water-food-energy triangle was key at the 2011 Bonn Nexus Conference, but the key the difference this year, according to an [essay](#) penned by David Grant, SABMiller's senior director of water risk and partnerships, for the *Guardian*, "was the progression of the issue from a broad theoretical concept to actually seeing practical examples of how it is being both experienced and addressed on the ground."

Grant added, "It has been encouraging to hear of projects being implemented that not only demonstrate understanding of the link between the issues but also the recognition that we can no longer tackle resource challenges in silos." But will they go far enough, soon enough? Promoting and monitoring sustainable water practices with partners along the supply chain is vital, as Nestlé's CEO argues.

"Putting pressure on farmers to use water more efficiently is not, in my view, the right thing," Bulcke said. "We must convince and help them to adopt more sustainable practices. Plants only need about 40-50% of the actual amount of water withdrawn for agriculture today, so there is still huge potential to make savings." Bulcke was a participant in a panel of laureates of the prestigious Stockholm Water Prize which Nestlé, a participant for the past five years, received in 2011, and he cited examples from his company's role in helping farmers use water more sustainably.

This year's winner of the Stockholm Water Prize is the [International Water Management Institute \(IWMI\)](#) along with [PepsiCo](#), recipient of the Stockholm Industry Water Award for the water platform within its [sustainability](#) program. PepsiCo's blog highlights its messaging at this year's World Water Week: [promoting](#) sustainable agriculture and [partnering](#) to meet the challenges of

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Case studies presented at the conference from Mexico and South Africa bore strong evidence of the success of a fact-based approach on water resource management. "In Mexico, this has led to the creation of a new water strategy, increasing the priority for water in the national planning and new investments in the water sector. In South Africa, work is still ongoing, but the multi-stakeholder platform that is currently in action is expecting concrete results in the form of implementable projects and programmes before the end of the year" [noted](#) Anders Bertell, Executive Director of the 2030 Water Resources Group and former Executive Director of the Stockholm International Water Institute.

In a significant step at the retail level, H&M, the Swedish multinational clothing company that's the second largest global clothing retailer (behind Zara and ahead of Gap) has [declared](#) a global ban on Perfluorinated Compounds (PFC:s) beginning January 1, 2013. "Our vision is clear: All our operations should be run in a way that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable," [stated](#) H&M CEO Karl-Johan Persson.

PFC:s are used as water repellents on outerwear garments, shower curtains, tents and the like, and are known to be harmful to the environment, for reproduction and for aquatic organisms. Since 1995, H&M's sustainability commitment has included working to reduce the use and impact of hazardous chemicals in their apparel and footwear supply chain.

Water tools addressing risks, particularly in the corporate sector, are emerging including the [CEO Water Mandate](#) [Water Action Hub](#), WWF's [Water Risk Filter](#), and [Aqueduct](#).

"While it is vitally important to keep on challenging our thinking and pushing boundaries, we must first create a consistent foundation level of understanding water risk and its interrelationships with other scarce resources," said Grant in his piece for the *Guardian*. "If we don't, progressive action on mitigation will remain the domain of best practice exceptions when what we really need is for it to become the norm."

The Water Futures Partnership, begun in 2009, continues to [campaign](#) for companies to engage in local collective action to address shared water risks facing the global ecosystem.

Having been [criticized in the past](#) (most notably in the documentary *Flow*) for its water policies, Nestlé hopes to its water commitment a year-round issue for discussion well beyond World Water Week, launching a [dedicated blog](#) with guests weighing in on the issues. As Bulcke warned in Stockholm, "Fresh water is being massively overused at nature's expense, but it seems only a global crisis will make us realise the importance of the issue. What is environmentally unsustainable today will become socially unsustainable in the future."

More about: [World Water Week](#), [Water](#), [Nestle](#), [H&M](#), [SABMiller](#), [PepsiCo](#), [Corporate Citizenship](#), [Sustainability](#), [Green](#), [Supply Chain](#), [Environment](#), [Activism](#), [CSR](#)

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