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Quarter of World's Freshwater Used to Grow Wasted Food

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STOCKHOLM, Sweden, August 29, 2012 (ENS) – “More than one-fourth of all the water we use worldwide is taken to grow over one billion tons of food that nobody eats,” Torgny Holmgren, executive director of the Stockholm International Water Institute, said Monday at the opening of World Water Week.

“Reducing the waste of food is the smartest and most direct route to relieve pressure on water and land resources,” he said.



Food taken from a school cafeteria but not eaten is carried on a conveyer belt towards the garbage can. (Photo by [J. Bloom](#))

World Water Week is the annual meeting place for the planet's most urgent water-related issues. Over 2,000 politicians, CEOs, scientists and leaders of international organizations from more than 100 nations are in Stockholm for the event, which this year focuses on “Water and Food Security.”

Today, over 900 million people suffer from hunger, and two billion more face serious health risks from undernourishment. Half the cases of malnutrition worldwide result from illness and infection from dirty water or unhygienic sanitation.

At the same time, 1.5 billion people overeat and over one-third of all food produced is lost or wasted, said Holmgren.

Demand for food and fiber is projected to increase by 70 percent by mid-century when the world's population is projected to reach nine billion; without intervention untenable pressure on water resources in many regions will threaten food and water security.

World Water Week participants are calling for substantial increases in public and private sector investment to reduce losses of food in the supply chain, enhance water efficiency in agriculture and curb consumer waste.



Colin Chartres, director general, **International Water Management Institute**, delivers the Stockholm Water Prize Laureate Lecture, August 27, 2012 (Photo by Thomas Henrikson courtesy [World Water Week](#))

"The numbers show that agriculture is a thirsty activity. But that also means that agriculture holds the key to sustainable water use," said José Graziano da Silva, director-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

That key is investment in smallholder farmers, da Silva said. "Throughout the world, 2.6 billion small-scale producers till the land, raise animals and fish. They are the main providers of food in the developing world. If we want them to produce more sustainably, preserving natural resources, adapting to and contributing to the mitigation of climate change, we need to help them. We cannot expect them to do it alone."

Dr. Colin Chartres, director-general of the **International Water Management Institute**, the 2012 Stockholm Water Prize Laureate, told the opening day audience, "Feeding over nine billion people by 2050 is possible, but we have to reflect on the cost to the environment in terms of water withdrawals and land resources. Furthermore it will put phenomenal pressure on ecosystem services on which our society depends."

"Saving water by reducing food waste, increasing productivity, plant breeding and waste water recycling are critical to all of us," said Dr. Chartres.

Tonight, Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden presented the 2012 Stockholm Junior Water Prize to three students from Singapore, who have developed an innovative method to remove and recover pollutants from water using clay.

The prize winners are 18-year-olds Luigi Marshall Cham, Jun Yong Nicholas Lim and Tian Ting Carrie-Anne Ng.

The students studied compounds called non-ionic surfactants, soap-like additives used in industry, in household detergents and in cosmetic products. They are common pollutants to wastewater that are hard to remove and current techniques used to treat them produce hazardous sludge which is difficult to dispose of.



2012 Stockholm Junior Water Prize winners, from left, Jun Yong Nicholas Lim, Tian Ting Carrie-Anne Ng and Luigi Marshall Cham, with Angela Buonocore of prize sponsor Xylem Inc. August 29, 2012 (Photo by [Cecilia Österberg, Exray](#))

They developed a method of using bentonite clay to remove and recover the pollutants from the water without generating any waste products. The clay absorbs up to 100 percent of the surfactants and can then be flushed clean with alcohol, allowing the surfactant compounds to be reused.

"This year's winning project shows the possibility of using a lower cost method to decrease an important water environment problem, which is relevant all over the world," said the international jury. "The study does not only present an efficient way to remove a toxicant, but also a novel way to recover and reuse materials which would otherwise be discarded as waste."

"We didn't expect it. We are very happy," the student winners said. "When we return home we will propose our idea to the Public Utility Board of Singapore and hopefully they will implement it."

The Stockholm Junior Water Prize 2012 competition attracted teams from 27 countries who won their national competitions.

"We are truly honored to be part of this very important competition with young people that are as excited about and interested in water as we are," said Angela

Buonocore, senior vice president and chief communications officer of Xylem Inc., the global sponsor of the Stockholm Water Prize.

The international winner receives a US\$5,000 award and a prize sculpture.

King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden Tuesday presented the honorary Stockholm Industry Water Award to PepsiCo for their efforts to reduce water consumption in their operations and to help solve water challenges on a broad scale.

The global food and beverage company conserved nearly 16 billion liters of water in 2011, from a 2006 baseline, through the application of water saving equipment and technologies, creative recycling and re-use, and by deploying a water management system throughout its manufacturing facilities.

On Thursday, the King will present the Stockholm Water Prize to the [International Water Management Institute](#), based in Sri Lanka, for their work to improve agriculture water management, enhance food security, protect environmental health and alleviate poverty in developing countries.



From left: Mohamed Bahaa El Din Saad, Water and Irrigation minister Egypt; José Graziano da Silva, director-general, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Torgny Holmgren, incoming executive director Stockholm International Water Institute, August 27, 2012 (Photo Thomas Henrikson courtesy World Water Week)

Seventy percent of global freshwater withdrawals are used in agriculture. With global food demand projected to double by mid-century, more food will need to be grown with less water.

The 28-year-old [International Water Management Institute](#) has been the driving force promoting policies and techniques to help farmers to produce “more crop per drop,” and to implement solutions that enable agriculture to cultivate enough food to feed the planet’s growing population with limited water resources.

The Stockholm Water Prize Laureate receives US\$150,000 and a crystal sculpture designed and created by Orrefors.

In more than 100 sessions throughout the week, experts are discussing the latest innovations and successful practices to provide clean water and safe sanitation. Participants are deliberating on issues such as countries leasing foreign land for agricultural production, trade, human rights, climate change, and the links among food, water and energy production.

Today, the Water Action Hub, a map-based data management system that allows users to identify potential collective action opportunities for river basins, organizations and projects, was launched at World Water Week.

“The Water Action Hub is designed to help companies and other organizations more effectively understand which stakeholders are active in particular river basins and any relevant water-related initiatives these stakeholders are undertaking. It is potentially transformational,” said Gavin Power, deputy director of the UN Global Compact, and head of the CEO Water Mandate.

The [Water Action Hub](#) was developed by the CEO Water Mandate in partnership with the International Business Leaders Forum, Deloitte, GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Pacific Institute, based in Oakland, California, which serves as part of the Secretariat of the CEO Water Mandate.

While the Water Action Hub provides a platform for local project implementation, the companion Guide to Water-Related Collective Action lays out how effective collective action in sustainable water management is both the key to approaching shared risk successfully and to addressing a point of vulnerability for many companies.

“The CEO Water Mandate is producing this Guide because collective action done right leads to a strong sense of shared interests, shared responsibility, and shared benefits,” said Jason Morrison, program director of the Pacific Institute and co-author of the Guide, now issued in a beta test version.

“The collective action process emphasizes joint, proactive engagement that leads to better and stronger outcomes than available through unilateral action,” Morrison said.

The CEO Water Mandate Guide to Water Resource Collective Action can be downloaded without charge from the Pacific Institute [website](#) and on the CEO Water Mandate [website](#).

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