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Investment in Food Waste Reduction Vital to Global Water Security

28 August 2012

The need to increase both public and private sector investment to address the loss of food in the supply chain and cut consumer waste has been highlighted in the opening session of the 2012 World Water Week in Stockholm.

The gathering of industry leaders in Stockholm, Sweden, for the annual World Water Week focused its attention this year on "Water and Food Security".

According to the organisers of the event, the Stockholm International Water Institute (SWI), currently over 900 million people suffer from hunger, and two billion more face serious health risks from undernourishment.



At the same time, the organisation said that some 1.5 billion people overeat and over one third of all food is lost or wasted.

To compound this the SWI said that demand for food and fibre is projected to increase by 70% by the middle of the century and, without intervention, untenable pressure on water resources in many regions in the world will threaten food and water security.

"More than one fourth of all the water we use worldwide is taken to grow over one billion tonnes of food that nobody eats. That water, together with the billions of dollars spent to grow, ship, package and purchase the food, is sent down the drain," explained Torgny Holmgren, executive director of the Stockholm International Water Institute.

"Reducing the waste of food is the smartest and most direct route to relieve pressure on water and land resources. It's an opportunity we cannot afford to overlook," he added. Also speaking at the opening session, Dr. Colin Chartres, director-general of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) commented: "Feeding over 9 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," he continued.

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