

Study: Asia needs water reform to cope with population growth

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Stockholm - Asia needs to improve irrigation and introduce water reform to feed growing populations in the coming decades, a new study said Tuesday.

The population in Asia is projected to increase by 1.5 billion people by 2050.

Without necessary reforms, many Asian nations "face the politically risky prospect of having to import more than a quarter of the rice, wheat and maize they will need by 2050," the joint report from the [International Water Management Institute \(IWMI\)](#) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said.

"Asia's food and feed demand is expected to double by 2050. Relying on trade to meet a large part of this demand will impose a huge and politically untenable burden on the economies of many developing countries," [IWMI](#) director general Colin Chartres said in a statement.

"The best bet for Asia lies in revitalizing its vast irrigation systems, which account for 70 per cent of the world's total irrigated land," he added.

The study was released in connection with World Water Week, an international gathering of policy makers and experts underway in Stockholm.

The scenarios in the report did not factor in climate change, where rainfall is projected to become more erratic.

South Asia was mentioned as a region where there was strong potential for improvement, and the researchers also suggested engaging "the private sector more actively in publicly managed irrigation systems," citing experiences from China. (dpa)