

Beefed-up diets of Asias middle class may lead to chronic food shortages

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Washington, August 30 - ANI: Scientists have said that the beefed-up diets of Asias expanding middle class could lead to chronic food shortages for the water-stressed region.

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According to a report in [National Geographic](#) News, the threat was highlighted in a study by the [International Water Management Institute \(IWMI\)](#) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which estimate that Asian demand for food and livestock fodder will double in 40 years.

Asias growing economy and appetite for meat will require a radical overhaul of farmland irrigation to feed a population expected to swell to 1.4 billion by 2050, [scientists](#) warned at Stockholms World Water Week recently.

At current crop yields, East Asia would need 47 percent more irrigated farmland and to find 70 percent more water, the study found.

South Asia would have to expand its irrigated crop areas by 30 percent and increase water use by 57 percent.

Given existing agriculture pressure on water resources and territory, thats an impossible scenario, according to the study authors.

Scientists urge modernization of existing large-scale irrigation systems, most of which were installed in the 1970s and 1980s.

Its estimated that India, the worlds largest consumer of underground water, has 19 million unregulated groundwater pumps.

Groundwater in northern India is receding by as much as a foot (0.3 meter) a year due to rampant [water extraction](#), most of it for crop irrigation, according to a study.

More than 109 cubic kilometres of groundwater were drained from the region between 2002 and 2008, according to the satellite image-based study led by scientists with NASAs [Goddard Space Flight Center](#).



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Governments inability to regulate this practice is giving rise to scary scenarios of groundwater over-exploitation, which could lead to regional food crises and widespread social unrest, said Tushaar Shah of IWMI.

As for China, the countrys per capita water footprint for food production has almost doubled since 1985, according to Junguo Liu of the Beijing Forestry University.

A switch from traditional rice and noodles to a meatier diet is behind the change, Liu said. Changes in food consumption are the major cause of worsening water scarcity in China, he added.

Total water requirements for food production in China are predicted to rise by 40 to 50 percent in the next 30 years, he further added.

Where do you get such a big amount of water' It is a really big question and a big challenge, he said.

If other [developing countries](#) follow China toward a Western diet, the global water shortage becomes even more serious, he added. - ANI

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