

## we are water Blog



2012 September 13

World Water Week 2012, which is held annually in Stockholm, this year focused on water and food security, and more specifically on the problem of food waste.

The official report *Feeding a thirsty world: challenges and opportunities for a water and food secure world* was presented.

The speakers emphasised increasing investments to improve the use of water for the agricultural sector, reducing food loss and making the end consumer aware in the responsible use of hydric resources.

### Wasted food, lost water

From the 26th to the 31st of August, more than 1,000 attending professionals from different spheres of science, politics and world organisations from more than 100 countries met this year at World Water Week in the Swedish capital. In more than 100 sessions there were debates on the fundamental role of water for the world when obtaining food, a question of security that affects all the inhabitants of the planet, and very particularly the high-on 1,000 million people suffering from hunger in the world.

During the event, the official report for this year's conference was presented, *Feeding a thirsty world: challenges and opportunities for water and food secure world*, on which experts from the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), the Agriculture and Food Agency of the UN (FAO) and the **International Water management Institute (IWMI)** have participated.



The information compiled in this report provides a new vision and sheds light on the problem of water and food security, since the current approaches regarding food production are causing an increasing scarcity of water, and there is an increasing imbalance between the people who eat too much and those who are undernourished.

There are around 900 million people suffering from hunger in the world today, while one and a half million are

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overfed, and the most startling fact is that more than one third of the food produced in the world is lost or thrown away.

The solutions set out in this report point to the improved use of water in farming, the reduction of losses and waste in the food supply chain, the improvement in the capacity to respond to the early warning networks for agricultural emergencies and in the increase in investment so that women can have greater participation in agricultural production.

The Executive Director of the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Torgny Holmgren, stated at the beginning of Water Week: "More than a quarter of all the water we use around the world is used to grow millions of tons of food that no-one eats. This water, along with the billions of dollars spent on cultivation, loading, packaging and buying food, ends up being wasted."

#### Young professionals: the future of water and food security

Young people played a key role in this year's World Water Week when talking about the future challenges regarding questions of food, water and energy.

During more than 100 sessions, the team made up of this new generation of water scientists and professionals collected opinions, interviews and publications when making their contribution this year. Some of their more relevant contributions and ideas refer to the very access to improved services of sanitation, drinking water, food, health and wellbeing, and to be able to count on healthy ecosystems.

Another important point is that of including neglected groups in decision-making, such as women, young people and indigenous peoples, and to have informed, aware and proactive citizens who know the value of food and water and who use resources wisely. To achieve these objectives they propose increasing sustainable investments in agriculture, wasting less food, understanding the relationship between water, energy and food and promoting the development of recovering and reusing resources.

#### Reducing food waste



According to the experts, food waste is directly linked to a large loss of water. The Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) report underlines, for example, that 40 per cent of food bought in the United States is thrown away. The report states that it is quite a common habit in countries with resources, something that contrasts dramatically with the close-on 1,000 million people in the world who are suffering from hunger and malnutrition.

It is estimated that figures for hunger will increase by 2,000 million people before 2050, so that with the same amount of water that is used today, and which is already scarce in many places today, unless urgent and suitable measures are taken, in the future we will not be able to cover food and energy needs, with an expanding population. This is why food security is closely linked to water security.

During World Water Week, Anders Jägerskog, co-author of the new SIWI report, stated: "Feeding everyone well is a priority challenge of this century. Food production may suffer future problems arising from the shortage of water. We are going to need a new recipe to feed the world in the future."



As well as the loss of water through food waste, during the sessions in Stockholm, scientists and professionals from the sector analysed another reason for the misuse of water: the irresponsible use of water in agriculture. Faced with the increase in recent years of hydric stress, the proposal is to implement drip irrigation systems as one of the main short-term challenges.

In that sense it should be highlighted that the We Are Water Foundation collaborates with the Vicente Ferrer Foundation in developing drip irrigation projects in the Indian region of Anantapur ([see project](#)). The campaign developed with the We Eat Water campaign ([go to download app](#)) also raises awareness regarding the hydric footprint of food – the amount of water required so that a specific food reaches the dinner table – and the importance of a fair and upright use of it.

The World Water Week is an outstanding event in the international calendar regarding the problems relating to hydric resources, which is held in Stockholm every year at the end of August. With the support of UNESCO, this summit is organised by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI).

<http://www.worldwaterweek.org/>

<http://www.sivi.org/>

About the We Are Water Foundation

The We Are Water Foundation has two basic objectives: firstly, to raise awareness amongst the public and the authorities about the need to create a new culture of water in the world and, secondly, to alleviate the negative effects related to the lack of hydric resources, through the development of cooperation projects alongside diverse organisations such as Education without Frontiers, the Vicente Ferrer Foundation, Intermón Oxfam and Unicef.

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