

Text F Not enough water?

Also, there's a fundamental problem when you only look at the total water resources and yet try to answer whether there are sufficient supplies of water. The trouble is that we do not necessarily know how and how wisely the water is used. Many countries get by just fine with very limited water resources because these resources are exploited very effectively. Israel is a prime example of efficient water use. It achieves a high degree of efficiency in its agriculture, partly because it uses the very efficient drip irrigation system to green the desert, and partly because it recycles household wastewater for irrigation.

By far the largest part of all water is used for agriculture - globally, agriculture uses 69 percent, compared to 23 percent for industry and 8 percent for households. Consequently, the greatest gains in water use come from cutting down on agricultural use. Many of the countries with low water availability therefore compensate by importing a large amount of their grain.

Summing up, more than 96 percent of all nations have at present sufficient water resources. On all continents, water accessibility has increased per person, and at the same time an ever higher proportion of people have gained access to clean drinking water and sanitation. While water accessibility has been getting better this is not to deny that there are still widespread shortages and limitations of basic services, such as access to clean drinking water, and that local and regional scarcities occur. But these problems are primarily related not to physical water scarcity but to a lack of proper water management and in the end often to lack of money - money to desalt sea water or to increase cereal imports, thereby freeing up domestic water resources.