

Text G Will it get worse in the future?

The concerns for the water supply are very much concerns that the current problems will become worse over time. As world population grows, and as precipitation remains constant, there will be less water per person, and using Falkenmark's water stress criterion, there will, be more nations experiencing water scarcity.

The problem of water waste occurs because water in many places is not well priced. The great majority of the world's irrigation systems are based on an annual flat rate, and not on charges according to the amount of water I consumed. The obvious effect is that participants are not forced to consider whether all in all it pays to use the last liter of water when you have first paid to be in, water is free. So even if there is only very little private utility from the last liter of water, it is still used because it is free. This is yet another example of The Tragedy of the Commons, as we saw it described in the section on fisheries.

This is particularly a problem for the poor countries. The poorest countries use 90 percent of their water for irrigation compared to just 37 percent in the rich countries. Consequently, it will be necessary to redistribute water from agriculture to industry and households, and this will probably involve a minor decline in the potential agricultural production (i.e. a diminished increase in the actual production). The World Bank estimates that this reduction will be very limited and that water redistribution definitely will be profitable for the countries involved." Of course, this will mean increased imports of grain by the most water-stressed countries, but a study from the International Water Management Institute indicates that it should be possible to cover these extra imports by extra production in the water abundant countries, particularly the US.

At the same time there are also large advantages to be reaped by focusing on more efficient household water consumption.