

Water shortage 'a global problem'

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Rich countries face increasing water shortages, a report by conservation organisation WWF warns.

A combination of climate change and poor resource management is leading to water shortages in even the most developed countries, it says.

It urges water conservation on a global scale and asks rich states to set an example by repairing ageing water infrastructure and tackling pollution.

The report was released in Geneva just ahead of World Water Week.

The WWF says economic wealth does not automatically mean plenty of water.

Its report reveals that some of the world's wealthiest cities - such as Houston or Sydney - are using more water than can be replenished.

In London leaks from ageing water mains are wasting 300 Olympic swimming pools' worth of water every single day, the WWF says.

Meanwhile southern Europe is becoming drier as a result of climate change and further north Alpine glaciers - a significant source of water - are shrinking

Knock-on effect

What is more, the report argues, wealthy countries continue to use up the water of the developing world.

The production of clothing, fruit, vegetables and even jewellery all need water. And the demand for cheap produce often encourages wasteful use of scarce water resources.

The WWF is also calling on wealthy countries to encourage more international co-operation over water because this is the one element no-one can do without.

And while money may be no protection against climate change, it can at least be invested in preserving the existing fresh water supplies.

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