

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD WATER DAY

22 March 2012

Over the coming decades, feeding a growing global population and ensuring food and nutrition security for all will depend on increasing food production. This, in turn, means ensuring the sustainable use of our most critical finite resource – water.

The theme of this year's World Water Day is water and food security. Agriculture is by far the main user of freshwater. Unless we increase our capacity to use water wisely in agriculture, we will fail to end hunger and we will open the door to a range of other ills, including drought, famine and political instability.

In many parts of the world, water scarcity is increasing and rates of growth in agricultural production have been slowing. At the same time, climate change is exacerbating risk and unpredictability for farmers, especially for poor farmers in low-income countries who are the most vulnerable and the least able to adapt.

These interlinked challenges are increasing competition between communities and countries for scarce water resources, aggravating old security dilemmas, creating new ones and hampering the achievement of the fundamental human rights to food, water and sanitation. With nearly 1 billion people hungry and some 800 million still lacking a safe supply of freshwater, there is much we must do to strengthen the foundations of local, national, and global stability.

Guaranteeing sustainable food and water security for all will require the full engagement of all sectors and actors. It will entail transferring appropriate water technologies, empowering small food producers and conserving essential ecosystem services. It will require policies that promote water rights for all, stronger regulatory capacity and gender equality. Investments in water infrastructure, rural development and water resource management will be essential.

We should all be encouraged by the renewed political interest in food security, as evidenced by the high priority given to this issue by the agendas of the G8 and G20, the emphasis on the nexus of food, water and energy in the report of my Global Sustainability Panel, and the growing number of countries pledging to Scale Up Nutrition.

On this World Water Day, I urge all partners to fully use the opportunity provided by the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. In Rio, we need to connect the dots between water security and food and nutrition security in the context of a green economy. Water will play a central role in creating the future we want.