

VOICE OF THE RURAL WORLD

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“Decrease”
in consumption of water

Summary

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Paraguay - 2010

Dear readers of VMR,

Warm greetings from international secretariat

This edition of VMR is focusing on our general theme "Decrease" but with a specific analysis on how to apply decrease in water consumption. While the world's population tripled in the 20th century, the use of renewable water resources has grown six-fold. Within the next fifty years, the world population will increase by another 40 to 50%. Population growth coupled with industrialization, changes in life style and urbanization will result in an increasing demand for water and will have serious consequences on the environment. Already there is more waste water generated and dispersed today than at any other time in the history of our planet: more than one out of six people lack access to safe drinking water, namely 1.1 billion people, and more than two out of six lack adequate sanitation, namely 2.6 billion people. The proportion of water for human use is increasing means that the water to produce food for human consumption, industrial processes and all the other uses is becoming scarce. This is the reason why VMR 106 reflects on the need to apply decrease in water consumption.

Changes in food habits, for example, may reduce the problem, knowing that growing 1 kg of potatoes requires only 100 liters of water, whereas 1 kg of beef requires 13 000 liters. Let us take action to save and conserve water. Do not forget to write me about your interesting activities in this regard.

I have one bad news to announce with this edition of VMR. You might have already know that MISEREOR, Germany have been supporting our publication for many years. With this support, we have been publishing 4 editions of VMR in a year in 4 languages. In 2010 and MISEREOR reduced 20,000 Euros in 2011 but we managed to publish 4 editions of VMR with 16 pages instead of 32 pages with the help of volunteer translators. We had a deficit of around 3,000 Euros for the Printing and posting during the last 2 years. We received a shocking letter from MISEREOR in April this year announcing the refusal of our VMR project which is quite unprecedented. If we want to publish 4 editions with 16 pages as like last year we need around 9000 Euros. If MISEREOR is not providing the subsidy, it is quite impossible to print and post the VMR as usual. Thus FIMARC EXCO held in Assesse, Belgium last month decided to stop the printing and posting of VMR to avoid the deficits. Hence the only way to continue with our publication is to produce it online. I am trying to organize the posting of at least one paper copy for each movement. Hence I request you to provide your email contacts if you want to receive the VMR by mail in the future. Let us hope for the best. For the moment we do not have any other options.

With lots of regards,

*George Dixon FERNANDEZ
General Secretary*



“Decrease” in consumption of water

As the world population has tripled during the 20th century, the use of renewable water resources has been multiplied 6 fold. During the next 50 years, the world population will increase by another 40 to 50% . This population growth - coupled with industrialization and urbanization - will result in an increasing demand for water and will have serious consequences on the environment

At present , more than one out of six people lack access to safe drinking water, and more than two out of six lack adequate sanitation. The water consumption per person increases due to the change of life style, the rising number of the population, the growing industrialization and as a consequence this essential resource become scarce in a very speed way.

The VMR 106 proposes to reflect to the need of implementing decrease in the water consumption. Changes in food habits, for example, can reduce the problem, if we know that we need only 100 liters of water to grow one kilo of potatoes while one kilo of beef requests 13,000 liters of water....

DISTRIBUTION OF SWEET WATER ON THE PLANET

Pure water represents only 2,5% of the total water volume on the planet. Pure water is unequally distributed too. Some regions are benefiting of considerable surplus, as for example Canada, Chile, Newzealand or Norway where the water disposal are over passing 50,000 M3 per person and per year. Other countries at reverse are suffering of lack of water every year. This is the case of Maghreb countries, Gulf or Central Asia, where the water reserve are less than 1,000 M3 per person, per year. Those vulnerable regions, often located in developing countries, are much exposed to the problem as the fast population growth is putting more pressure on water resources.

In the industrialized countries, each person consumes more or less 320 liters of water per day but in the developing countries, each person uses 70 liters per day as an average.

We use to say that a region is suffering from hydro stress when its annual water resources are less than 1,700 liters per year and per person. We are even speaking of lack of water when the water quantity taken from the lakes, rivers and underground is less than 1,000 m3 per year and per head and when this can no more respond to the human needs and needs of the ecosystems.

DISTRIBUTION OF WATER IN FRESHWATER AND SALT IN THE PLANET		
	<i>km3</i>	%
<i>Freshwater</i>	35 000 000 km3	2,5 %
<i>Glaciers and permanent snow cover</i>	24 000 000 km3	68,9 %
<i>Groundwater</i>	8 000 000 km3	30,8 %
<i>Lakes and reservoirs</i>	105 000 km3	0,3 %
<i>Salt water</i>	1 365 000 000 km3	97,5%
<i>Total volume of water</i>	1 400 000 000 km3	100 %



ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER

Since 28th July 2010, access to drinking water is recognized as a fundamental right by the United Nations. The United Nations has recognized that access to clean drinking water of quality and sanitation is a human right and requested the financial and technological assistance of the Member States. The text recalls that one in eight does not have access to drinking water. The lack of access to water and sanitation cause each year the death of 3 million people and of a child every three seconds. 1.5 million children die each year from diarrhea, among others, and one third of these deaths could be avoided through the establishment of adequate sanitation. According to WHO (World Health Organization), the proper amount of water is at least 20 liters of water per capita per day while generally means "reasonable access", drinking water available within fifteen minutes walk.

The access to drinkable water technically can be separated in several phases such as a drop of water, flown from the water resource to the consumer, then the dismissal of the water consumed in the environment. This is more and more often adds "social" phases to rational use, education on health and sustainable use of the means of access and the resources. It is question here of the protection and exploitation of water, construction of the canals and its distribution, its eventual placement possible in reserve and the treatment of waste water, which should not in any case harm to the environment.

According to the geographic and social context, the approach to the problem of access to drinking water varies greatly. In an ideal case water is available readily, with security, and is of excellent quality. However in many cases around the world water may not be available except in reduced quantity, temporarily during the wet season, or is of poor quality, or it is several hours away from the households.

The situation in Latin America

Latin America is fortunate to have fresh water in abundance. It is on its soil that flow 4 of 25 major rivers of the world - the Amazon River, the Parana, the Orinoco and Magdalena. Some of the largest lakes in the world are also located in Latin America. The Amazon basin provides only 20% of global water debit - the renewable resources that make our fresh water supply. With one-fifth of global water resources, the Brazil is, among all countries, the more water-rich. Latin America holds the world record of water availability.

But geography, pollution and social inequalities distort the conditions of water access of Latin Americans, and most of them are far from consuming the entire part they could get. Poor agricultural practices, a wild industrialization and urban poverty greatly hampered the water resources in Latin America. For example, the largest polluter in the region is the Brazil with huge industrial and chemical pollution includ

ing oil spills of mercury from gold mining. Most of waste water from Latin America continues to return to the rivers, lakes and canals without having been processed.

The situation in Africa

The idea that water is lacking in Africa would be wrong. It is in any case the affirmation that the division of waters and lands of the United Nations food and agriculture (FAO).



Contrary to what some say, sub-Saharan Africa is not in water shortage. We can mention for example the Congo, where there is so much water and arable land that it could feed the entire continent. The problem is more an improper use of resources, often lack of means or by default of policies, including in the agricultural sector.

Bénin, 2007

The situation in South East Asia

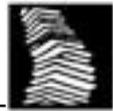
The volume of water in South Asia depends on monsoon rains and the melting of snow in the mountains of the Himalayas. The fact that 90% of the water of the rivers and rivers of South Asia flows in the Indian Ocean without being exploited explains the lack of cooperation and infrastructure. Worse, few are those who are aware of the threats posed by water scarcity for their security and their development.

The States of South Asia -yet with a large hydro graphic network powered during all season by the rivers from the Himalayas -fail to understand that the water becomes



little by little the main bone of contention between political authorities and has increased the difficulties. In India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, this situation gave rise to deep resentment - and serious crises between the provinces unevenly with water. The agreement and the cooperation between the riparian States should not use water as a weapon against the other, but a cure for underdevelopment and disease.

Inde 2007 (Photo D. Herman)



And elsewhere in the world

The North Africa and the Middle East region is one of the regions that suffers the most from water scarcity. In Jordan, the water tanks installed on the roof of the houses in Amman are an element as part of the landscape. A necessity, since the service of running water there is provided two hours per day only. In the Yemen, the population consumes only 2% of the ration of water which is that of the ordinary people in other parts of the world.

This is not yet says that countries are inevitably doomed to difficult aftermath; they have the means to cope if they change some of their policies that promote non-rational exploitation of land and over exploitation of resources in non-renewable water, pollution and harm to the environment, as well as the lack of maintenance of the infrastructure.

On the overall situation

5% of the States, this means 9 countries share 60% of world reserves of fresh water: the Brazil, the Russia, the United States, the Canada, the China, the Indonesia, the India, the Colombia and the Peru. We must add a very heterogeneous distribution of the population that sometimes increase the disparities.

It is as well as Asia brings together nearly 60% of the world's population has only 30% of the global freshwater resources. The Amazon basin which includes only 0.3% of the world's population concentrated 15% of its fresh water.

Questions for groups and movements :

- *What is the situation of access to water in your country?*
- *Access to water is it free or paid?*
- *Which are the companies that manage the water distribution system in your country?*



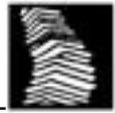
WATER A RIGHT FOR ALL ?

In principle, Yes. There are two biological things that are essential: water and air. We could override all that we want to live except these two elements. This essentiality and the fact that those two elements are vital pour all, made them common goods for all. They are so mater of rights. Not a desire or a need to satisfy by its grabbing.

Another problem related to water distribution is privatization, imposed in many countries by the World Bank. This results to an increase in tariff rates not allowing people living under the poverty line to have access to these services. For example, in the Uruguayan province of Maldonado, water tariffs have increased dramatically and reserves have been contaminated when Uruqua, a subsidiary agency of Aguas ,the water company of Spain, obtained the right to distribute the water on a profit base of "full cost recovery." The Uruguayans managed to schedule a national referendum with legislative value in October 2004, that water benefit from the protection of the Constitution as a human right and public wealth, out of reach of profit corporations..

But it is not sufficient to draft a global treaty to make the State affirm that water is a common good of humanity. It's necessary to institutionalize the political concept of the existence of humanity. Humanity has the responsibility of water. And not the States, which continue in a geo-strategic and financial logic. Local and global water character have to be recognized. If we continue with our high energy intensity mode of production of our economy, we are going straight into the wall. The greenhouse effect involved in the global warming melts glaciers and raise sea levels.

The fresh water will become less important because the penetration of seawater. If it continues like that, studies show that in 2032, 60% of the world's population will live in areas of strong shortage of water instead of 25% at the present time. It means that people will have less than 500 cubic meters of water per capita per year for all combined uses. The minimum is normally of 1,700 cubic meters. Between 1,000 and 1,700 cubic meters, is considered that you are in water stress. Less than 500 cubic meters means that you are in shortage.



PROBLEMS OF WATER MANAGEMENT

Since 1940, the consumption of water in the world increases each year of 2.5 to 3% while the rate of population growth is only 1.5 to 2%. In developed countries, water shortages have increased annually by 4 to 8% between 1990 and 2000.

Almost half a billion people in 31 countries, most of the Middle East and Africa today suffer from lack of water. According to the UN, at the current rate of growth of the population and its needs in fresh water, by 2025 the average amount of available fresh water will fall from 6600 at 4800 m³ per capita and per year; this means a reduction of close to one-third. On that date, experts estimate that 5 times more people than today will be affected by the water shortage, representing 2.8 billion people or 35% of the population of the earth at this time!

By 2025, 17 other countries, including Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria and Peru will be added to the list of countries in lack of water. China and Pakistan will approach the state of water stress. If the increase in water levies continues at the current rate, between half and two thirds of humanity should be under water stress by 2025 that is a reversal of the current situation at the expense of poor countries. The alert threshold for less than 1700 liters of fresh water available per capita and per year (< 5 liters/day) will reach.

All efforts are now focused in the awareness of the public and of the agricultural world. If citizens can easily reduce their water use, a change of mentalities in the agricultural sector does not operate from one day to the next and requires investments that all farmers are not able to carry out without the help of the State. The problem of irrigation is important because it is agriculture which feed the entire population of the planet. Productivity can only increase and with it the over-consumption of soft water. Already excessive, it should still increase by 17% to 2025.



Togo - 2007

There is also the humanitarian issue. Today, a resident in five does not have access to drinking water. According to the UN, on 33 cities counting more than 8 million people, that will exist in 2010, 27 will be located in the least developed countries and therefore have less power to meet the needs.

How to stop this process? As an attempt to reverse this trend, various solutions exist to reduce water consumption and limit losses: improve the efficiency of irrigation techniques, generalize the use of the most effective methods, renovate the structures of production and distribution of drinking water and building new ones, preserving reserves, fight against pollution, including remediating polluted areas, by recycling water... But as already noted all of these measures are very expensive and generally inaccessible to developing countries.

The problem can be thus resolved only at political level, in consultation with national and international bodies and redirecting the priorities of investment towards the most affected regions and the projects most likely able to reverse this trend.





REDUCTION IN THE CONSUMPTION OF DRINKING WATER

We have seen above for the reduction of the consumption of water on a large scale, solutions exist but they depend on the political will of the countries, of the investments that they will be willing or able to consent.

At the individual or household level, solutions also exist. It will be mainly of the use of water for domestic consumption. A few tips are easy to do:

- The dry toilets, controlled organic litter crossing to reduce the consumption of water of a household of 25 to 40%.
- The recovery of rain, in a plastic or concrete tank. Concrete allows to reduce the natural acidity of rain and mineralize the water that this will not affect the pipes.
- In the sinks and washbasins, special taps, or economizers can also decrease consumption. The same for the shower heads that are saving about 38000 liters per year.
- Low-flow toilets or devices such as tank bank bags (or easier by putting asking a bottle filled with water in the tank of the hunt) allow savings of nearly 10 cubic meters per year.

Questions for groups and movements :

- *What would be the measures to reduce water consumption?*
- *What would be the measures to harvest rain water?*

International Agenda

The world environment day will be celebrated on June 5th, On 15 June it was the turn of World Day against Hunger before celebrating the World Food Day on 16 October.

All these days are symbolically important and allow us to remind us of the global issues. But, the importance is not only to celebrate these particular days but to take initiatives for moving the things.

For example, the Via Campesina prompts its member organizations and his allies to organize and coordinate struggles throughout the month of June, mainly during the international day of the environment, June 5.

All initiatives are welcome: marches in the cities or in the countryside, press conferences, actions for agrarian reform and access to land, communication campaigns, radio programs, mobilization against companies responsible for environmental degradation, discussions in schools and universities, projections of documentaries and other actions that you organize collectively.





News from the Movements

Executive Committee of the FIMARC.

The Executive Committee of the FIMARC met last April in Assesse, Belgium, at the headquarters of the FIMARC. After an exposure program in two farms in the region, a biological one and the other in conventional agriculture, a seminar on "Investment in agriculture: challenges and opportunities for small farmers" was organized. During these days of training, the various experts have highlighted the need to invest in sustainable agriculture that allows farmers to live in dignity, while respecting the natural and reproductive resources. The current trend towards investment is unfortunately not that one, but more and more experts and studies agree that it is time to stop this large-scale investment that depletes the land, pollutes the rivers and are ultimately more harmful and costly than investments which would be made in the frame of small scale agriculture

The ACAR Switzerland and Food Sovereignty.

The concept of Food Sovereignty is well known and taken seriously by the members of the ACAR, Swiss Movement, the member of FIMARC. With the FIMARC, we became aware that food sovereignty is the path to take to stop the injustices creating famine and wrong development in the world. Already in 2001 the bulletin "Sign of time, n°72" gave broad information and relayed the peasant trade union "UNI-

TERRE" which is a popular initiative project to record food sovereignty in the Constitution. The ACAR is part of this trend and is organized to raise awareness of other NGOs, Church movements and population. Evening debates took place in the region of Fribourg. It seems important to announce the good news of the right to food for all and the right to food sovereignty. During the debates, serious questions are raised: concern for farmers not being able to meet the needs of their families with the product of farm labor - import of fodder in particular of soybean containing GMOs - export of the surplus - butter and imports of palm oil - access to land and the disappearance of agricultural land - the seed and the bio-diversity - relations producers - consumers...

World Food Day 2012.

"Agricultural cooperatives - keys to feed the world" is the theme set by the FAO for the World Food Day which will be celebrated on 16 October 2012. This theme was chosen to highlight the role of cooperatives in the improvement of food security and their contribution in the struggle for the eradication of hunger.

We remind our movements and associations members to prepare themselves now for our traditional campaign which will culminate at the World Food Day. You will receive soon information from the secretariat in this regard.



*Participants to the International seminar on
“Agricultural Investments” - Assesse, April 2012*



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