

FROM WATER TO FOOD SECURITY

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There are complex connections between water and food security. National policies, agricultural policies and water policies can shape food security. Increasing water supply is increasingly expensive. At the right price level, large amounts of water can be produced. But can the economy sustain it? Increasing water use efficiency is possible but requires some (modest) level of investment. Rainfall is free! Controlling pollution is a necessity. Pollution is ethically not defensible. Pollution costs must be internalised. Reallocating water is a means for more efficient use. But depriving the poor of sustenance is ethically not defensible. Agriculture can accommodate some degree of reallocation to other sectors. There is considerable potential in better use of rainfall. Poor people should not be deprived of the rainfall they need to produce the food they need. Water scarcity has driven home the realization that not all water is a social good that should be available free of cost. In addition to the basic allotment for drinking, food and hygiene, there is an amount of water used for food production by people who do not have alternatives to secure their nutrition. There is therefore a need to enshrine the right to water of subsistence farmers. This right includes full use of rainfall, rainwater harvesting and, for farmers depending on irrigation for their food production, to an adequate amount of irrigation water.