



UN  
2023 WATER  
CONFERENCE

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## UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

*A generational challenge in agriculture: Addressing the complexity of the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus*

24<sup>th</sup> March 2023, 14.00-15.15 CET, UN HQ New York

Organized by: International Association of Students in Agricultural and Related Sciences (IAAS), World Food Forum, Wageningen University & Research, MetaMeta, EIT Food, UNFCCC YOUNGO Agriculture WG, IsDB, Wetlands International, MENA Youth Network, International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA) & CGIAR

### **Background on the event (one paragraph)**

In this interactive side event, participants stepped in the shoes of different stakeholders and addressed the complexity of water challenges with a holistic water-food-energy-ecosystem perspective enabling a transition towards sustainable water management worldwide. We started with a quick brainstorm session after which trends in water use and food production in the region were presented. This provided fertile ground for two mini workshops: the first on a disappearing lake in Morocco and the second one the future of water in Iraq. Closing remarks were provided by Lana Weidgenant (YOUNGO & ProVeg International), Dr. Andy Zynga (CEO EIT Food) and Maximo Torero (Chief Economist FAO).

### **Water Action Agenda (one paragraph, if possible, please include the link to your commitment in the [Water Action Agenda database](#))**

Several of the co-organisers have put their commitments in the Water Action Agenda – and/or are still planning to do so. A small selection of commitments already made:

- IAAS: <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/educate-one-million-youngsters-water-annually-until-2030-together>
- WUR: <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/water-food-two-year-research-program>
- IAAS is working on a commitment with its newest project, the IAAS Delta Project.

**Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)**

- In light of water scarcity and a changing climate, it is pivotal to consider water in its full complexity and entirety. The Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus is a good framework to do so.
- In the MENA region, it is observed that water consumption in irrigated areas has grown in the past decades, and that biomass production increase did not always keep up with this growth. This calls for a closer look at water allocation and water use – in agriculture and beyond.
- In Morocco, NGO Living Morocco has been seeking to stimulate investment in safeguarding / restoring upstream wetlands from agricultural abstraction and inspiring the uptake of environmental flows in the design / operations of water management infrastructure. They have also established a water fund for the basin to support upstream restoration and been somewhat successful in attracting investment for this. This case study provided more insight in the nexus and a fertile ground for discussion.
- In Iraq, although positive trends have been seen in biomass production and water productivity in irrigated agriculture, the intersecting issues of conflict, mismanagement, political instability, inter-nation tension, lack of public awareness, and the lack of funding have made it difficult to make advancements to deal with the growing water stress in the nation. Partnerships between the government and international groups like the World Bank, FAO, USAID, and the UNDP are promising steps toward a more sustainable future, but more needs to be done in terms of youth and civil society engagement, the equitable sharing of water resources, promoting sustainable water management, and supporting the needs of vulnerable communities.

**Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)**

- Consider water in its full complexity and entirety.
- Use the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem framework.
- Youth and civil society engagement in decision-making must be prioritized on local, national, and regional levels.
- Legislation and projects must prioritize the most vulnerable and impacted communities.