



UN
2023 WATER
CONFERENCE

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UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

Enhancing resiliency in Food Systems through Water Stewardship

23 March 2023, (09:30 – 10:45 EDT), The Nature Hub

Organized by: Alliance for Water Stewardship

Background

The [Alliance for Water Stewardship \(AWS\)](#) convened an event at The Nature Hub to discuss the adoption of water stewardship and its role in building resilience in global food systems on Thursday, March 23, 2023. Speakers from agricultural, food and beverage companies, development financiers and a supporting consultant presented case studies that highlighted the benefits of water stewardship practices in building resilience in business operations and supply chains.

Co-conveners of the event were: Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft (DEG); Netherlands Entrepreneurial Development Bank (FMO); Dole Plc; Mars Inc.; Nestlé S.A.; Nutrien; PepsiCo; and South Pole.

Water Action Agenda

Our goal is that by 2030 adoption of the water-focused sustainability standard, the AWS Standard, is the norm in several business sectors, creating a global network of tens of thousands of sites making meaningful, verifiable contributions to the sub-targets within SDG 6.

Water Action Agenda commitment: [Credible, verified private sector action on SDG6](#)

Key Issues discussed

- As a critical resource for the common good, speakers emphasized the importance of managing water sustainably as a shared resource for the benefit of people and the planet.
- Water demand is already outstripping supply in many locations around the world, making water stewardship is an essential opportunity to build resilience in agriculture and food production, which accounts for over 70% of freshwater use globally.

- The AWS Standard was presented as a systematic approach to implementing water stewardship, with certification against the AWS Standard a means to ensuring verified and credible action.
- Speakers encouraged agricultural producers to engage with AWS to begin their water stewardship journey to help build resilience in global food systems.
- The greatest challenge comes at the supply chain level; companies must ensure they have a sustainable and reliable supply of water for crop yields and food security.
- Speakers emphasised the challenge of unavoidable water inputs: for example, there is no such thing as a net-zero water cucumber, as its water content is 96%.
- In conclusion, the session highlighted the importance of water stewardship as a shared endeavour that goes beyond water management to bring different groups together to address shared water challenges and support water security.

Key recommendations for action

- Water stewardship is an opportunity for the private sector to take action to address shared water challenges and achieve progress in meeting the targets outlined in SDG 6.
- The AWS Standard provides a systematic approach to implementing water stewardship.
- Implementing the AWS Standard enables business sites to become ‘collective action ready’, creating opportunities for collaboration between business, civil society and government.
- Certification against the AWS Standard enables credible claims by major water users, such as farms or factories.
- This process provides validation that actions are meaningful and have been implemented successfully, guarding against ‘bluewash’.
- Government incentives for credible and verified water stewardship can build confidence and help to enhance resiliency in food systems.

For more information, visit: <https://a4ws.org/un-water-2023/>