

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WATER FOR PROSPERITY

Valuing water, water-energy-food nexus, advancing integrated and sustainable water resource management, wastewater and water-use efficiency across sectors, and economic and social development

An extract of the Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs to Interactive Dialogues Concept Papers

About this Paper

This paper is an extract from the report of the Second Global Online Stakeholder Consultation: Inputs to Interactive Dialogues Concept Papers, which summarizes inputs received from stakeholders to a global online stakeholder consultation organized by UN DESA in connection with the 2026 United Nations Water Conference, which will be held from 2 December to 4 December 2026, in the United Arab Emirates.

The main Report can be found [here](#), including links to all responses and all inputs to the six Interactive Dialogues, as well as detailed background information and a summary.

This paper presents summaries of key messages for Interactive Dialogue: Water for Prosperity, valuing water, water-energy-food nexus, advancing integrated and sustainable water resource management, wastewater and water-use efficiency across sectors, and economic and social development.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

WATER FOR PROSPERITY

valuing water, water-energy-food nexus, advancing integrated and sustainable water resource management, wastewater and water-use efficiency across sectors, and economic and social development

220 responses were received for the Interactive Dialogue theme pertaining to Water for Prosperity.

Challenges

Fragmented and weak water governance, inefficient water use, and insufficient wastewater treatment and reuse were cited by stakeholders as the most pressing challenges to valuing water in economic and social development. Respondents reported that **incoherent legal frameworks, overlapping or unclear mandates** across government levels, and **politicization and corruption** in water allocation delay investments and undermine integrated water management.

"Trade corridors depend on healthy oceans and waterways, yet climate stress and fragmented water governance undermine their resilience. This limits progress on water security and economic opportunity in regions reliant on maritime and inland connectivity." DP World, United Arab Emirates

Concern was also expressed about agriculture as the largest, yet least efficient water user and the pervasiveness of the industry's water waste due to leaks and poor incentives. It was reported that subsidies often encourage overuse rather than efficiency, and that outdated technology leads to the **over-extraction of groundwater**.

Low social acceptance of water reuse, inadequate wastewater treatment **infrastructure**, and weak enforcement of pollution and industrial discharge standards remain significant barriers despite growing water scarcity as expressed by stakeholders.

"The most critical challenge is the valuation and financing gap for water-sector infrastructure, especially for wastewater treatment and resource efficiency." National Water Resources Board, Philippines

Additional challenges highlighted by respondents include **lack of access to climate finance, siloed decision-making, and insufficient digital infrastructure** for monitoring water quality, use, and performance. Importantly, treating water as free and infinite creates a disconnect between cost, price, and value resulting in a failure to recognize the **true value of water** and its importance in ecosystems as reflected in many stakeholders' responses.

"Valuing water is an economically complex concept, without which we will be unable to meaningfully integrate the true cost of water services to our life and livelihoods." EAWAG, Switzerland

Solutions

To overcome these challenges, stakeholders have proposed **integrating the Water-Food-Energy nexus into national and local policy and planning**, implementing smart and solar powered irrigation systems, and supporting ecosystem restoration. Acknowledging and leveraging the **interlinkages** between the systems that provide the food we eat, the water we drink, and the energy we use is critical to accelerating progress across SDGs 2, 6, 7, 13, 14, and 15 according to respondents.

An integrated planning of Water-Energy-Food is to be promoted by governments through research funding. These analyses provide a scientific basis for water-energy-food policies and implementation of related strategies based on science. This would enable the availing of future resources, and the accessibility and affordability of their services. Centre International pour la Recherche Multidisciplinaire Appliquée (CIRMA), Democratic Republic of the Congo

Stakeholders emphasized that **capacity-building for farmers** to successfully adopt data-driven irrigation scheduling and efficient water-use technologies is essential.

"Training farmers on water-efficient practices and linking agri-cooperatives to renewable energy sources strengthens sustainable production and resource valuation." Aid Gate Organization for economic development (AGO), Iraq

Building **green infrastructure**, soil moisture farming, and implementing dissolved oxygen restoration and **natural water filtration systems** were additional proposed solutions for improving local water security and reducing freshwater depletion.



PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

In their responses, stakeholders shared examples of partnerships that have proven helpful in promoting Water for Prosperity. A few of these are highlighted below.¹

The [e-ReWater MENA](#) initiative aims to unlock the largely untapped potential of recycled water across the Middle East and North Africa through an advanced AI-powered decision-support tool that integrates earth observation and data analytics. The tool produces high-resolution, spatial data on wastewater availability, sectoral demand, and reuse potential, supporting authorities in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to accelerate water reuse and strengthen long-term water security. Delivered through an accessible water-reuse dashboard, the results provide actionable insights for policymakers, investors, and entrepreneurs, while addressing persistent data gaps and enabling more accurate planning and sustainable water-resource management across the region.

Highlighted by: International Water Management Institute, Italy

Highlighted by: Alliance for Water Stewardship Standard, Pakistan

The [Alliance for Water Stewardship Standard \(AWS Standard\)](#) helps major water consumers analyze their water use and impacts through a globally applicable framework. This fosters collaboration and transparency in the improvement of water stewardship. The AWS Standard is designed for companies, public sector agencies, and investors who want to mitigate operational and supply chain water risks, ensure responsible water procedures are in place, build relationships with water-related stakeholders, and address local catchment challenges with those affected by them. Since its founding in 2009, AWS Standard has gained 221 members, trained over 2,100 people, issued certificates to 69 countries, and certified more than 350 sites.

¹These examples reflect inputs shared by stakeholders and are presented for illustrative purposes only; they do not imply endorsement by the United Nations. 4

TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS

As part of the consultative process, stakeholders were asked to identify one transformative action needed to accelerate progress towards the Water for Prosperity objectives. A few examples can be found below.

“Current models drive overuse and inequality; instead, we need circular systems that cut water use and reward equity, health, and ecosystem integrity—measuring prosperity within planetary and biophysical limits.” Mercy Corps, Colombia

"Governments must implement the "valuing water" approach, recognizing its worth as a social good, ecological necessity, and driver of economic growth and culture."

C40 Cities, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

"The key change that has to happen is embracing systems thinking, which includes going beyond singular solutions of irrigation investment and other water solutions."

International Food Policy Research Institute, Canada

“Governments, development partners, and the private sector must institutionalize Water-Energy-Food Nexus Platforms that align policies, budgets, and data systems, incentivize circular resource use, and scale green technologies to enhance water efficiency, energy security, and rural prosperity by 2030.” Public Fund Open Innovations R&D, Kyrgyzstan



Figure 8: Visual representation of keywords stakeholders used to describe their perspectives on the theme: Water for Prosperity.