

Business and water: Opportunities and challenges



Business and water: the relationships

Business agricultural activities impact upon water

...through industrial and agricultural withdrawal
...through pollution of water ways
...through land use and infrastructure changes

Business activities are vulnerable as they rely upon water

...for ensuring the quantity of produce
...for guaranteeing the quality of produce

External forces are putting pressure on water resources

...as user demands are increasing and diversifying
...as water supply infrastructure is becoming inadequate and outdated
...as climate change impacts water sources

What are the water-related challenges for business?

There is a wide variety of competing users: *Of the world's 276 international river basins, 60 per cent lack cooperative management frameworks.*

Water quality and quantity needs are intensifying: *Meeting basic human and ecological needs for water, improving water quality, eliminating overdraft of groundwater and reducing the risks of political conflict are all becoming increasingly complicated.*

The impacts of climate change affect water resources throughout operations: *Climate change can influence business costs through the price of water inputs, the effect on crop harvests and the disruptions caused by more frequent extreme weather events.*

Water risks are reinforced by concerns over failure of climate change mitigation/adaptation and by food crises, which are both also intricately linked to water. Water shortages can limit production, disrupt supply chains, lead to conflict with other water users and harm corporate reputations. Safeguarding water and ensuring its availability in sufficient quantity and quality is a subject of vital interest to business.

What are the water-related opportunities for business?



Mondi: Delineating the freshwater ecosystems of its South African wetlands and withdrawing commercial plantations from wetland areas and adjacent buffer zones.

Despite the loss in production for Mondi, this has been compensated by the provision of more water for downstream communities, the establishment of important biodiversity corridors and the reputational benefits of responsible environmental management.



Ingredion: Not only treating but also diverting its facilities' waste water to meet or exceed the regulatory requirements for waste water discharge in Thailand.

Collaborating with local regulatory officials has enabled Ingredion to determine more beneficial applications for waste water effluent such as Napier grass to feed cattle. This has subsequently increased local income and enhanced Ingredion's local reputation.



Anglian Water: Engaging in the Sink or Swim collaborative with the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership to test how a multi-sector approach to the management of the Wissey catchment can alleviate water challenges.

The project innovated four models for cross-sector finance and opened the door for businesses, like Anglian Water, to build coherent water investment and management strategies.

Read the entire **Doing Business with Nature** report at <http://www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/natcap>