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Cross-sectoral cooperation key to managing water risk, report finds

Cooperation between businesses, water companies and the government will be key to managing scarce water resources and securing future supplies, according to a new report from the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) launched today at the Royal Society in London.

Sink or Swim, from the Cambridge-hosted Natural Capital Leaders Platform, is the result of a collaboration between nine companies across six sectors that examined new strategies to manage this economically strategic resource, which underpins many business activities.

Peter Simpson, Chief Executive of Anglian Water, who spoke at the Royal Society launch said: "Ensuring that water is carefully stewarded and available in sufficient quantity and quality is a vital component of business success. Water scarcity can damage productivity, disrupt supply chains, put water users in competition with each other, and ultimately harm corporate trust and reputation. These risks impact sectors in many different ways, but collaboration and innovation are absolutely key to achieving resilience and to protecting the economy."

The report presents four new financial models, each of which offers an innovative approach to achieving multi-sector water investments. The models were developed by examining the value of water to different sectors and scrutinising various income and finance streams.

The models present a broad spectrum of options for cross-sector collaboration and finance, ranging from more conventional water-company-led approaches to pure private sector initiatives. They challenge the current single sector approach and encourage joint investment by a variety of stakeholders, including water companies, retailers and farmers.

The Collaboratory's aim is to enhance stakeholders' resilience to water shortages, including by securing the long-term supply of produce from farmers to retailers, and offering water companies the opportunity to expand their business beyond the regulated public water supply.

Chris Brown, Sustainable Business Director at Asda, said: "Inconsistent or unreliable supply of produce – caused by water scarcity or flooding - has a direct impact on supply chains. Retailers cannot act alone to manage necessary water supplies: a collaborative approach is needed, which is why we are pleased to be part of this initiative."

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Notes to the editor:
The launch event is taking place at the Royal Society in the morning of Tuesday 3 June 2014, by invitation only. Please contact Gemma Cranston if you would like to attend.

The full report will be accessible on 3 June 2014: www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/natcap

Speakers include:
Dr Paul Leinster (Chief Executive, Environment Agency), Peter Simpson (Chief Executive, Anglian Water) and Dr Chris Brown (Sustainable Business Director, ASDA Stores Ltd), Dr Gemma Cranston (Programme Manager, CISL) and Paul Shaffer (Associate, CIRIA).

About CISL: The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) brings together business, government and academia to find solutions to critical sustainability challenges. Capitalising on the world-class, multidisciplinary strengths of the University of Cambridge, CISL deepens leaders' insight and understanding through its executive programmes, builds deep, strategic engagement with leadership companies, and creates opportunities for collaborative enquiry and action through its business platforms. HRH The Prince of Wales is the patron of CISL and has inspired and supported many of our initiatives.

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