

Water issues could harm Bangladesh textile sector

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DHAKA – A lack of effective water governance in Bangladesh could hinder the country's economic growth, including ambitious plans to dramatically boost ready-made garment exports in the coming years, according to new research.

The WWF and H&M have worked together on the two reports in Bangladesh as part of a programme of engagement on water stewardship. The first report looked at water governance gaps, while the second looked at the likely economic outcomes from varying water governance scenarios.

The research acknowledges that textile and leather processing is having "significant impacts on water resources, sometimes leading to environmental degradation and potential health problems for people" in Bangladesh.

Preliminary report findings also suggest the gap between "water policy and implementation in Bangladesh is likely to affect the country's GDP, living standards, food security and textile export growth by 2030."

Decisive action on water governance could, suggests the research, "reduce health care costs and lost productivity due to lack of water and sanitation, reduce the cost of irrigation pumping for farmers, and protect textile production sites from running out of usable water in major industrial areas."

The reports from WWF and H&M draw on interviews with communities, business, government and NGOs and claim to have identified "promising opportunities to strengthen water governance in Bangladesh, in particular ensuring that regulations are properly monitored and enforced, water-related government bodies have clear mandates and reporting mechanisms, and that businesses, farmers and community members are included in decision-making on water."

The textile industry in Bangladesh one of the leading contributors to the country's water scarcity and pollution challenges, with most textile mills in Dhaka relying on un-metered and un-priced self-supply of groundwater from boreholes. The PaCT: Partnership for Cleaner Textile programme has suggested some textile mills use 250 - 300 l water/per kg of fabric, whereas global best practice is around 50 l/kg or less. It also notes that groundwater levels are dropping in Dhaka, meaning boreholes need to be drilled lower and lower in order to access water – leading to a groundwater situation in Dhaka which has become critical, with levels in the city falling by about two meters per year.

WWF and H&M are launching a preview of the economic report and a full version of the governance report at an event held in Dhaka by the 2030 Water Resources Group.

Website link <http://www.ecotextile.com/2016020121934/materials-production-news/water-issues-could-harm-bangladesh-textile-sector.html>