

NEWS BULLETIN

22 March 2011



GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations is concerned about the situation in urban areas of the developing world in particular. This is because as urban populations grow, water use will need to shift from agriculture to municipal and industrial uses, and therefore render difficult decision-making about allocation to the different users. So urban dwellers will experience severe water stress, and this poses a challenge to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target of reducing by half the number of people without access to water and sanitation by 2015.

ENVIRONMENT - Forested areas in Europe, North America, the Caucasus and Central Asia have been increasing steadily, growing by 25 million hectares over the past two decades, the United Nations said, citing diseases, insects and storms aggravated by climatic factors as the major threats to the ongoing health of woodlands.

HEALTH - The list of the top 30 medicines includes oxytocin, a drug used to treat severe bleeding after childbirth, the leading cause of maternal death, as well as simple antibiotics to treat pneumonia, which kills an estimated 1.6 million children under the age of five every year.

WOMEN - There is an urgent need for more women in agricultural research, particularly at PhD level and beyond, according to a report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. The 2010-11 edition of the State of Food and Agriculture, launched by the UNFAO, said that female scientist are essential to efforts to increase the productivity of farms run by women in developing countries.

AFRICA

WATER - The number of people without access to adequate water and sanitation facilities in Africa has risen swiftly in recent decades as the continent's rapid urbanization outpaced its capacity to provide the essential services, two United Nations agencies said in report released today.

KENYA / SOMALIA - According to the UN Children's Fund, the primary school attendance rate is 43 percent while in secondary schools the rate is just 12 percent. Across the three camps, there are 19 primary schools, funded by the UN Refugee Agency. In addition there are 11 private, fee-paying primary and six secondary schools.

ASIA & PACIFIC

JAPAN - The safety of Japanese agricultural products has come under even greater scrutiny after elevated levels of radioactivity were found in spinach and milk products. Radioactive iodine also was found in tap water some 20 miles from the earthquake-stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, prompting an official at the World Health Organization to say the food safety situation is "more serious" than originally thought.

WFWO's Communications Team