

Weekly Water Report, Middle East and Africa

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Residents welcomed the government's commitment to prioritize water development, as the government program will put out of business the backstreet water production companies that were hastily set up to sell unpurified water in plastic pouches.

"Many of these companies and groups work from unhygienic surroundings, many times located near polluted streams and filthy areas to package water in tiny polythene bags," according to Health Inspector Sani Turay.

Others in the water trade admitted, "we don't process the water, the suppliers do. We only buy the water at the refrigerated stage wholesale before we resell them."

One woman who had been in the water business for some 10 years now observed that "the water situation in Sierra Leone is stressful."

"Many times, I have to hire taxis to convey the water in six-liter plastic containers. Some of my customers complain sometimes that the water is smelly and not clean," she said.

"But some of my friends have made huge money through water sales," she added.

"If adequate, pipeborne water is provided for residents as promised by the government, our trade is bound to fold up," she said.

EMWIS Focuses on Data, Scarcity and Drought, and Wastewater Reuse

VALBONNE SOPHIA-ANTIPOLIS, France (OOSKAnews) — Developing national water information data systems, drought and water scarcity prevention and risk management, and non-conventional water resources, particularly wastewater reuse, are the top priorities of the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on Know-How in the Water Sector (EMWIS) over the next three years.

Once further funding is available, EMWIS says it also plans to focus on participative approaches to Integrated Water Resources Management in the Euro-Mediterranean region, local management of sanitation services and domestic pollution prevention.

Planned activities over the next year include creating public national and international web portals, establishing a Mediterranean water observation mechanism, and organizing the Euro-Med Water Directors Forum in Ljubljana, Slovenia on December 10-11 of this year.

The conference will pave the way for the ministerial conference, scheduled to take place at the end of 2008.

The directors forum will include a progress review of regional water initiatives, with recommendations for further action; an updated mandate for the Euro-Mediterranean and SEE (South East European) Directors Forum; identifying the topics and main products of the ministerial conference; and developing

an action plan for the preparation of the ministerial meeting.

EMWIS, a strategic tool for exchanging water sector information among Euro-Mediterranean Partnership countries, began operating in 1999.

Countries involved in EMWIS include the 27 members of the European Union, the 10 Mediterranean partner countries — Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey — and (since 2005) the Balkan nations and Libya.

It provides members with a means to collect, exchange and disseminate information on water in the region, particularly in light of the high level of water stress in the Mediterranean region.

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