

WATER RESOURCES IN LEBANON AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

The annual growth of Lebanese economy and population are placing more pressure on the limited water supply in the country. Lebanon's geographical location and climate made it one of the most important water sources in the Eastern Mediterranean. World Bank showed that Lebanese total renewable water resources are estimated at 1100 m³ per capita, one of the highest total renewable water resources in the MENA region, compared to 2700 m³ per capita in Iraq and 800 m³ per capita in Syria. Agriculture is by far the largest consumer of water in Lebanon (as elsewhere in the region), followed by domestic and industrial uses.

Auxiliary uses and functions of water include the generation of hydroelectricity (hydroelectric power plants), recreation (waterparks and sports), and aquaculture. According to the Census of Buildings and Establishment, 79 % of buildings were connected to water supply networks. Water is one of Lebanon's most precious resources. Unfortunately, while significant investment is made to tap water resources, very little is done to preserve it. Human activities exert strong pressures on both the quantity (water abstraction) and quality (water pollution) of water resources. In addition, many activities affect the water cycle (deforestation, dams, irrigation, drainage canals) thereby altering the conditions for water replenishment. For example, soil erosion (soil acts as a sponge) and the loss of plant cover (plants intercept rainfall) diminish groundwater recharge. Continued soil erosion and loss of plant cover (including forests), will lead to scarcer water resources and poorer water quality. Water quality will not improve until the practice of disposing untreated wastewaters on land and into streams and rivers stops. It is both responsibility for the government and people. The government must take big act to clarify the needed water supply maybe like gulf countries to benefit from sea water by fertilize. The people has a responsibility to push their government to take real actions toward achieving the needed water resources in order to force economy to have the best growing results in order to achieve prosperity and to gain benefit in being Lebanon a competing country in many sectors.

The ambition to see Lebanese "natural role" re-established as a pivotal center and a regional pole collided with a series of internal as well as external obstacles, and has succeeded only in a few limited fields (luxury tourism, banking sector, etc.). In parallel, the main exportable services as well as industry and agriculture face a tough competition and need clean water.