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Challenges in water and energy technology in the MENA region

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The MENA region is the most water stressed region in the world and decreasing resources are endangering access to the most important resource worldwide. Primarily, the region lacks natural water resources. Although it contains 6% of the world's population, its inhabitants have access to only 1.5% of the global renewable water supply through rainfall. Besides the arid climate, there are only three major river systems in the region providing water to the population.

Furthermore, a rapidly growing population, economic development and the consequences of climate change could aggravate the situation in the coming decades. Several indicators of the tense situation can be attributed to human factors, namely water management, old or non-existent water infrastructure, heavy irrigation and an overuse of groundwater. Yet beyond the growing water demand and the ensuing scarcity, another concern of the region's decision-makers is the increasing energy consumption, which endangers

oil and gas exports and thus the major source of revenues for most MENA countries. As a consequence, energy efficiency and in particular both water management as well as water technology solutions now play a significant role in the respective countries.

One of the major challenges regarding water use in the region is the overuse in agriculture, which amounts to approximately 85% of total water consumption. Besides the export-oriented agriculture industry in Maghreb countries, this high number is caused by waste and a low water productivity, with an average irrigation efficiency of only 51%. Consequently, there is a huge potential for saving large amounts of water resources through more efficient approaches, such as drip irrigation. Another concern is the large amount of non-recycled waste water, which amounts to 82%. Thus, wastewater treatment solutions and capacities are in large demand. Generally, a more rational and efficient water use

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