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IRAN, MIDDLE EAST, NEWS

# Iran needs sustainable management of its water resources – experts

2 Comments
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Farmers work in paddy field for strewing rice seeds in Gilan, Iran on May 05, 2022 [Fateme Bahrami – Anadolu Agency]

Iran is facing challenges in efficiently managing its current water resources and needs sustainable water resource management, according to experts in both water resources and foreign policy.

A new report by Tugba Evrim Maden, policy development coordinator at the Turkish Water Institute (SUEN), says that Iran is ranked 24th globally for water stress, highlighting significant water resource issues in the country.

The report, "Chronic Water Problems in Iran", lists factors such as rising population density, flawed water policies, ambitious agricultural policies and short-term unsustainable projects as some of the causes of the country's water woes.

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The country, which once hosted the Ramsar Convention on wetland conservation, is now at risk of losing vital wetlands, including Lake Urmia and others like the Shadgan, Gavkhouni, Bakhtegan, Enzeli and Hamun lakes.

With the excessive construction of dams and mismanagement of water resources in Iran, salinity has increased in 14 rivers and 40 dam reservoirs, two-thirds of the country is experiencing desertification and the groundwater table has declined.

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Limited water resources in regions with high population density have led to a shortage of drinking water in recent years.

Due to its climate, Iran gets limited rainfall, with the per capita water availability dropping from approximately 7,000 cubic meters per year in 1956 to 1,500 cubic meters in recent years.

The report predicts that Iran's water problems will worsen in the coming years and become a significant issue for both its economic and political stability.

Iran's water resource projects, aimed at long-term solutions, have led to environmental issues like lakes and rivers drying up and excessive groundwater use.

Unequal distribution of rainfall in Iran, particularly in densely populated and water-poor regions, has exacerbated water scarcity issues.

The report also highlights the significant water stress in the region, particularly in the Urmia basin in eastern Iran.

The report also stressed Iran's need for sustainable water resource management.

**Impact of inter-basin water transfer**

Seyfi Kilic, a foreign policy and water politics expert at Mugla Sitki Kocman University in western Turkiye, told Anadolu that the near desiccation of Lake Urmia serves as evidence of Iran's flawed water policies, resulting in harm to both its domestic population and neighbouring nations.

He said that dust from the dried Urmia lakebed spread to regions as far away as the Caucasus and Turkiye.

Kilic also said the constant dam construction in Iran disrupts natural water flow and hurts lakes.

On the Aras River issue, which has been less discussed, Kilic said Iran's vocal stance on Turkiye's dams impacting the Tigris River in Iraq is a tactic to deflect attention from the potential dam effects on Iranian tributaries of the Tigris.

The Aras, mainly serving as a border between Iran and neighbouring countries and regions like Nakhchivan, Armenia and Azerbaijan, is not a significant water consumption basin, said Kilic. Instead, he explained, its primary purpose is hydroelectric power generation, with limited irrigation activities.

Kilic added that technical discussions among technical committees of these issues have been going on for a long time.

**READ: Iran reiterates claim on shared water resources with Afghanistan**

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