



March 14, 2024

Re: Thematic Report to the 79th session of the UN General Assembly “Water and food nexus: a human rights approach to water management in food systems”

Dear Mr. Pedro Arrojo Agudo,

Often, this right is used as a basis for arguing for unsustainable use of water resources which leaves them depleted or polluted; hence denying humans enough quantities of clean drinking water for use. It is also stressed that assuring poor people’s right to good health through clean drinking water supply entails reinventing damaged aquatic ecosystems they depend on as sources . In many instances, small-scale food production with self-sufficiency purposes among impoverished rural populations is compromised by over-harvesting and pollution of aquatic habitats .

The interlinkages between both rights and the positive and negative experiences on sustainable (or unsustainable) use of water sources by food systems have been a topic of discussion at global, regional, national, and local levels. Court rulings too have shaped this talk. A case in point here would be Indian Supreme Court’s order in 2019 mandating 11 polluting industries around Bangalore City’s Bellandur Lake catchment area closed because it was one source of city’s drinking water. Thus, sometimes even courts are forced into protecting watersheds as well as aquatic environments against wanton human actions.

For example, in India alone two major court cases illustrate how important it is safeguarding freshwater bodies along with their associated ecosystems. On the one hand in 2019 Supreme Court ordered shutting down some eleven polluting factories near the Bellandur Lake, Bangalore city’s major source of potable water. For instance, in 2020, the European Court of Justice found that Poland had violated EU law by allowing logging in the Białowieża Forest which was a UNESCO World Heritage site and provided drinking water for millions of people. People are now being informed that, safeguarding aquatic ecosystems and freshwaters mean that they will be clean for human use.

The interlinkages between both rights and the positive and negative experiences on sustainable (or unsustainable) use of water sources by food systems are complex and multifaceted. The right to food also links with right to safe drinking water as well as sanitation. Both rights should be ensured through sustainable water management practices. Consequently, “Water and food nexus: a human rights approach to water management in food systems” issued by the Special Rapporteur will offer good lessons into this concern at global level helping to shape strategies towards it.

At the local level, there are many examples of sustainable water management practices that support both the right to food and the right to safe drinking water and sanitation. In particular, Los Angeles City has introduced an initiative aimed at harvesting and reusing rainwater for irrigation in order to reduce demand for fresh sources of H₂O. Rajasthan State in India has adopted community based freshwater governance system which enhanced accessibility regarding poor peasants while minimizing chances of running out. What is clear from these illustrations is that maintaining ecological sustainability within this sector ensures promotion of both wholesome nutrition standards through adequate feeding provisions as well as public health care services delivery via availability of clean domestic supplies.

Therefore, all members of the society should be treated equally without discrimination in order to uphold human rights. The relationship between both rights and the positive and negative experiences on sustainable or unsustainable use of water sources by food systems are complicated and multifaceted. It is necessary to maintain sustainable water management measures for both these to happen. This will serve as a guiding piece that will benefit policy formulation at world level as stated by United Nations Special Rapporteur’s report on “Water and food nexus: a human rights approach to water management in food systems”. For example, there are many cases where the right to life has been violated through lack of access to clean safe drinking water which can support sustainable agriculture under irrigation schemes.

Sincerely,

Daniel Thomas

Daniel Thomas
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