

UAE tap water 'completely safe'

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Tap water in the UAE is "completely safe to drink" and residents "shouldn't rely so heavily on bottled products", panellists argued at the eighth community lecture held by the Emirates Environmental Group (EEG).

Attendees discussed new challenges in the Middle East's water conservation efforts, and in particular the concept of "water footprint".

One of the key concerns raised was the dependence of many UAE residents on bottled water.

Habiba Al Marashi, chairperson of the EEG, said: "It is important we tackle the misconception that tap water is not fit for human consumption. We need to educate people and build awareness in order to reduce reliance on bottled water. "I believe we are part of a 'synthetic generation' as many people are not in touch with natural resources.

"The Middle East region has been gaining ground in economic development; it must also pay attention and give priority to issues related to diminishing water supplies. We need to be more environmentally aware and join in efforts to save our natural resources."

Demand for bottled water in the UAE remains high despite the fact that tap water is desalinated, a process that consumes large amounts of energy, into a highly pure product.

Sarfraz H. Dairkee, a founding board member of the Emirates Green Building Council and head of the Technical Committee, said the UAE had a growing water footprint that could also have an impact on neighbouring countries. He said: "In the UAE, the availability of natural resources is near zero per cent but there is a huge demand for water. The UAE, and the rest of the Gulf, has a very high water consumption, which in turn leads to a high water footprint."

"[The] water footprint is a key indicator of the amount of water used directly and indirectly to produce goods and services, Dairkee said. "There is an imbalance in the footprint making it a pressing issue that we should look into and start resolving.

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