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A new World Bank report titled “High and Dry: Climate Change, Water, and the Economy” highlights the importance of water for food, energy, and urban and environmental systems. The report projects that water scarcity will increase globally and impact economies, migratory patterns of populations, and create geopolitical conflict.

A key figure in the report estimates that by 2050 at a “business as usual” pace, water scarcity will result in a loss of 6 percent gross domestic product (GDP) in large number of sub-Saharan and northern African, Middle-Eastern, and Asian countries. Compared to a global scenario of efficient water policies put in place by 2050, northern Africa and the Middle East would still see a 6 percent loss.

The World Bank report recommends that nations adopt three general water policy priorities in order to combat the imminent effects of water scarcity. The first is to optimize water use through planning and incentives. This would require better allocation of scarce water resources across sectors, as well as an increase in water efficiency within sectors. Second, water supply and availability must be expanded by investing in storage infrastructure and water recycling and reuse. And third, resilience must be addressed in order to reduce the impact of extremes, variability, and uncertainty of water resources. This would require better urban planning, risk management, and public engagement efforts.

Sources: The World Bank, E&E News
