

## **Global business survey reveals that over 90% of sustainability specialists believe a water crisis is looming**

- **WSP Environment & Energy surveyed sustainability specialists across UK and global businesses with a combined turnover of over £100bn**
- **70% believe that the risks of water scarcity are equal to the impact of carbon emissions**
- **65% of respondents believe that Governments need to align their carbon policies with water legislation**
- **54% of those surveyed believe that the world will run out of water before it runs out of fuel**

London, 8 September 2009: Global environmental consultants, WSP Environment & Energy, have conducted new research into water scarcity, surveying sustainability specialists across a spectrum of public and private sector organisations, including FTSE100 and FTSE350 companies, with a combined turnover of over £100bn. Of those surveyed, 92% agreed that a water crisis is looming, with 70% of the respondents believing that the risks of water scarcity are equal to those of carbon emissions. The survey also revealed that 65% believe that governments need to take further steps to ensure that policy on water shortages catches up with legislation surrounding carbon emissions. One other key finding was that 54% of respondents believed that the world will run out of water before it runs out of fuel.

The survey highlights that businesses are aware of the significant dangers of water scarcity. David Symons, director of WSP Environment & Energy comments: "As our survey reveals, there is no doubt that businesses are starting to realise that water availability is set to change, and cannot be ignored. Water is used in all that we consume and reduced supply will have profound problems for businesses. Our survey reveals that there is demand from business for government legislation to help drive change. Businesses must, also react quickly themselves as water presents significant business opportunities and threats."

David Symons continues: "Climate change will alter water availability patterns. This will mean that companies will be impacted much more than just in the water they use in their facilities. Supply chains will come under pressure, as water rich areas become increasingly sought after and products become harder to source. Customers will also demand water lean products, creating opportunity for innovation. Companies that understand their end to end water use better than competitors will create shareholder value and future proof their activities."



WSP has undertaken research into the types of products that will be under threat from water scarcity, which include: Egyptian cotton, Kenyan coffee and Peruvian asparagus - all products that are produced in water scarce regions. David believes that it will be essential for businesses to undertake a number of actions, which include:

- De-risking supply chains by identifying products that are sourced from areas with water stress and water scarcity
- Reducing water consumption in operations across all business streams
- Spotting opportunities for low water products before competitors
- Identifying broader investment opportunities i.e. in areas with significant water resources and also potentially withdrawing from investments in areas forecast to become unsustainably water scarce.

David concludes: "Whilst our survey suggests that there is an understanding of the threat posed by water scarcity, very few companies have adopted adequate measures. The time for companies to react is now."

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### **Notes to editors**

WSP Group plc, is a global consultancy practice offering management and consultancy services to the built and natural environment. WSP Environment & Energy is a division of the Group - employing 1000 staff worldwide.

WSP Environment & Energy is a top 5 global consultancy firm specialising in climate change, sustainability, environmental and energy issues. They have offices all around the world with clients from all sectors, including construction, property, automotive, electronics, transport and industrial.

WSP Environment & Energy has launched a water calculator that helps companies understand their end to end water footprint. The tool measures three things: the water consumed in producing the products sold, the water used in their own operations and the water used by customers using the products they've bought. The tool identifies the products that use the most water and also where this water use is particularly sensitive. The tool is the first to measure a water footprint across a company in an individual way. It is also the first to map the results in a simple, easily understood way.

WSP Environment & Energy has been voted 'Sustainable Consultant of the Year' 2008 – Building Magazine and is recognised as one of the 'Top 12 Green Leaders in Business' at the Barclays' 2008 Awards.