

Topic: Raising the water price to reduce consumption and waste

Water is a precious commodity, and its waste is quite high. According to the most recent available data, published by WWF, the amount of renewable water resources corresponds to about 116 billion cubic meters, whilst the volumes of water actually consumed are estimated to be around 52 billion cubic meters. Overall, more than 30% of the renewable water resources available in our country are being used and, because of this, OECD considers Italy to be a country suffering from a medium-high water stress.

"Water is ten times more expensive in Berlin than in Rome (5 euros per cubic meter, against 50 cents in Italy), and in Germany it is consumed less than in Italy", Stefano Mancuso states, Professor at the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Florence, affirming, just like many others, that increasing water prices can yield benefits in terms of water savings.

Is it actually the right solution? To raise the price of a common, necessary good, deemed to be humankind's lifeblood and protected as public good?

**Argument PRO:** "Increasing water prices is necessary to reduce consumption and waste".

**Argument AGAIST:** "Increasing water prices is not necessary to reduce consumption and waste".

#### Current situation, scenario, and context.

The water footprint is a global indicator for both direct and indirect use of freshwater. It accounts for just 2.5% of the planet's water resources, 70% of which is stored in the ice and snow of the mountain, in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. Human beings have at their disposal a total of 0.08% of all the Earth's water, but in the next twenty years the consumption of unsalted water is expected to grow by at least 40%.

Population growth and higher income levels lead to an increase in demand for water-intensive products, such as meat, sugar, and cotton.

This produces impacts on freshwater ecosystems such as the fragmentation of rivers, the drying up of water in rivers and lakes, and it poses a threat to freshwater species.

The situation is further exacerbated by climate change and rising temperatures, which affects the distribution and pattern of rainfall; it causes the melting of water reserves such as glaciers, the evapotranspiration, and thus it accelerates phenomena like the one experienced by our territory.

Consequently, some believe that increasing water prices would lead to a rationalization of consumptions of such good. According to others, more obstacles should be introduced, as waste would still be extensive.

#### Arguments pro:

- Raising prices would reduce consumption and waste, making water more accessible to all.
- By increasing the price, the true value of water, a precious, fundamental and deeply devalued and abused good, will be clearly understood.

#### Arguments against:

- Being a public good, water cannot and must not be subjected to prices nor privatization.
- The value of water is already well known to all the families who are cut off from using the good itself, because of the very cost of the bill.

#### FURTHER INSIGHTS:

- OECD Observer: [Pricing water](#)
- [What is a water footprint?](#)