# Fast facts: The State of the World's Land and Water Resources

**United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization**
http://www.fao.org/nr/solaw/solaw-home/en/

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## Agricultural production

- Expansion in the area of land used to cultivated food crops between 1960 and 2010: **12%**
- Increase in world agricultural productivity during the same period: **150-200%**
- Extent of total cultivated land (rainfed + irrigated) in 1961: **1.4 billion hectares**
- Extent of total cultivated land (rainfed + irrigated) in 2006: **1.5 billion hectares**
- Cultivated area where irrigation was practiced in 1961: **139 million hectares**
- Cultivated area where irrigation was practiced in 2006: **301 million hectares**
- Average number of hectares of cultivated area needed to feed one person in 1961: **0.45 ha**
- Average number of hectares of cultivated area needed to feed one person in 2006: **0.22 ha**

## Land use

- Total world land area suitable for cropping: **4.4 billion hectares**
- Percent of the total world cultivated area that is rainfed: **80%** (1.2 billion ha)
- Total land area currently being cultivated: **1.6 billion hectares** of which 20% (0.3 billion ha) is on marginally suitable lands
- Share of world land sources that are degraded: **25%**
- Share that are moderately degraded: **8%**
- Share that are improving: **10%**
- In several regions, soil quality constraints affect more than half the cultivated land base, notably in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern America, Southeast Asia and Northern Europe.

## Water use

- Percentage of all water withdrawn from aquifers, streams and lakes by agriculture: **70%**
- Percent of total world crop production produced by rainfed agriculture systems: **60%**
- Amount by which irrigation typically improves farm yields: **Double**
- Volume of rainfed cereal yields in the developing world, on average: **1.5 tonnes/hectare**
- Volume of irrigated cereal yields in the developing world: **3.3t/ha**
- Average number of crops per year on rainfed lands in Asia: **1**
- Average number of crops per year on irrigated lands in Asia: **2**
- Percentage of world population now living in water-scare regions: **40%**
- Number of countries currently use more than 40 percent of their water resources for irrigation each year, a threshold that is considered critical: **11**
- Number of countries that are withdrawing 20% of their water resources annual, indicating substantial pressure and impending water scarcity: **8**
- Percent of renewable water resources currently used in Libya, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt: **%100+**
- Percent of total renewable water resources currently used in South America: **1%**

## Global disparities

- Percentage of the world's land area that is covered by low-income countries: **22%**
- Cultivated land per capita in countries **Low income: 0.17 ha/per capita**
  **Medium-income: 0.23 ha/per capita**
  **High-income: 0.37 ha/per capita**
- The average availability of cultivated land per capital in low-income countries is less than half that of high-income countries and the suitability of cultivated land for cropping is generally lower.
- High-income countries, as a group, cultivate more than twice the land area per capita (0.37 ha) than either middle income (0.23 ha) or low income (.017 ha) countries.