Saudi Arabia to invest $80 billion in desalinated water production

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The state-run (owned and operated by the government) Saudi Saline Water Conversion Corporation (SWCC) has announced plans to invest about $80 billion by 2025, to keep up with the growing demand for access to potable (usable/consumable) water. This would boost desalinated water production in 2025 to 8.5 million cubic meters per day.

As part of its constant efforts to work towards developing sustainable (long-term) methods of potable water production, Saudi Arabia has announced projects that will include the world’s first solar-powered (powered by the sun) desalination plant. Valued at $130 million and scheduled to be completed in 2017, the plant will produce 60,000 cubic meters of water to supply Al Khafji City, in Saudi Arabia, ensuring a constant water supply throughout the year. A rapidly growing population, and a high water usage rate has motivated Saudi Arabia’s efforts to boost sustainable water production and curb skyrocketing demand. (The government wants to make water available to more people.)

Dr. Abdullah Al AlShaikh, the Chief Executive of Advanced Water Technology, has stated that “technology plays a major role in solving the diminishing supply and increasing demand challenge in Saudi Arabia.” He also added, “There is no one-size-fits-all approach. We must be moving on all fronts, simultaneously.”

The use of clean energy sources to drive desalination and waste water treatment plants is a case in point for such innovations, “Continuous improvement in how we produce or purify water and how we improve the use of power is key to sustainability,” stated Roberto De Diego Arozamena, Chief Executive of Abdul Latif Jameel Energy and Environmental Services. "New pre-treatment processes, nanotechnology filtering processes, and electrochemical desalination are either being explored or are already in use in various stages of deployments.” “The SWCC is trying to double energy efficiency from the current level of about 26-27 percent to 54-55 percent, and is increasingly looking at renewable resources (sun, wind, and water power) to achieve this target,” he added.