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## **Church group examines 'water-thirsty' industries**

London - A church lobby group that seeks to influence corporate business behaviour in Britain and Ireland is turning its attention to the issue of water, which the group says now affects regions once thought to have plentiful supplies.

"The corporate sector has a major influence on water resources and consumption. Society looks to companies - particularly in water-thirsty industries - to manage water use responsibly and sustainably," said the Oxford-based Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility.

The Council now plans to bring together representatives of the environmental and business sectors to examine how water supplies can be maintained in the face of rising demand, climate change and pollution.

"Countries traditionally considered 'water secure' are increasingly affected," the Council said in advance of a meeting due to take place in London on 27 September. The gathering will take the form of an open debate on the theme of "Water sustainability: the challenge to business", and will also examine technologies available to make better use of available water supplies.

The Geneva-based Ecumenical Water Network says that only 0.008 percent of the planet's water is available for consumption. "Water must be used efficiently for agricultural and industrial, as well as for domestic use," the Network has explained.

Miles Litvinoff, the co-ordinator of the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility, told Ecumenical News International that the forthcoming London meeting is linked to research the Council is doing into water usage by British and Irish food and drink companies.

The ecumenical body's membership comes from faith-based groups in Britain and Ireland, and the group's aim is to bring about responsible practice in the corporate sector by using, in some instances, the leverage of church investments to achieve dialogue with firms.

"We also seek to influence church and secular ethical investors through bearing witness and enabling local voices to be heard on the impacts of large companies' activities on communities," Litvinoff added.

He said that in recent years the ECCR had made an impact on corporate behaviour in industries ranging from food processing to the oil and mining sectors.

Web links:

Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility  
[www.eccr.org.uk/news\\_main.html](http://www.eccr.org.uk/news_main.html)

Ecumenical Water Network  
[www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home.html)

[Source: ENI]