

Policy Adequacy in Attaining Sustainable Consumption of Water in Malaysia: A Conceptual Outlook

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ABSTRACT

For too long the onus has been on governments and, to a lesser extent industries and NGOs to address the problem of unsustainable consumption particularly in water. It's time some of this responsibility is shifted to the consumers. This matter is of particular concern in Malaysia due to the possibility of the country facing a major water crisis if the current onslaughts of water shortages are not addressed. As supply side solutions are deemed to be unsustainable, drastic measures need to be taken to overcome this problem which inadvertently includes promoting sustainable consumption of water. Hence it is inevitable that consumer behavior be shaped and molded to bring about more sustainable practices particularly in water consumption. It is the standpoint of this paper that although the present state of unsustainable consumption of water in the country can be attributed to a number of factors, "ineffective regulatory structure" comprising water policies, water legislation, procedures, rules and regulation remain a primary contributory factor. There is currently no national water policy to govern pricing of water, accessibility of water and sustainability. As such indiscriminate pricing of water by state agencies has led to wastage (where water rates are low) and deprivation (where water rates are high). Consumer education and participatory decision making which could have helped to reduce unsustainable use of water has not featured prominently in the water policies. This paper discusses the various policy tools/instruments that can be utilized to promote sustainable consumption among consumers especially domestic consumers. Issues arising in the policy process and recommendations to remedy the policy framework are also discussed in the paper.

Keywords: adequacy, consumption, policy, sustainability, water
