

## **ILSI Global Initiative on Water and Sanitation Perspectives**

Water is a diminishing resource in many parts of both the developed and developing world and the situation is predicted to deteriorate with the onset of climate change. The decline in global freshwater resources is caused mostly by increasing rates of water extraction and contamination. This has resulted in a decline in both water quality and quantity, as exemplified by arid regions such as the Mediterranean, Northern Africa and Australia. The availability of adequate supplies of safe water has been further compounded by factors including expanding populations, particularly in urban areas, giving rise to increased demand for fresh water and food.

Increased consumption of fresh water and food in turn generates greater volumes of domestic wastewater, which, due to the shortage of clean fresh water, is often subsequently used to irrigate human food crops. In the developing world, irrigation of crops with polluted water or wastewater is a reality. Thus, water supply and quality are intertwined with food security and safety, in particular in the case of fresh fruit and vegetables (fresh produce) which are eaten either raw or undergo minimal processing.

In the light of the background information, the ILSI Europe Emerging Microbiology Task Force recently initiated a new activity on 'Water and Sanitation Perspectives' in collaboration with eight other ILSI branches (America, Brasil, India, Korea, South Africa, South-east Asia, Japan) and with the technical support of WHO and FAO. The following priority areas have been identified, which will be addressed by the various branches. The study will try as far as possible to include all aspects of water, which have an impact on food safety and/or public health. An Advisory Group was formed with representatives from ILSI Branches as well as stakeholders (WHO, FAO, IWA, etc.). A kick-off meeting is planned for Summer 2011.