

US, Sweden unveil \$25 mln clean water technology grant

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An Egyptian farmer tends to his fields on the banks of the Rasheed river in the northern Giza province on June 22, 2013. The US Agency for International Development and the Swedish government announced a \$25 million grant program Monday to increase access to clean water for farming.

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The Securing Water for Food program is intended to fund innovators and help their businesses take root in countries where the technology is desperately needed.

"Almost three billion people on the planet right now live in areas impacted by [water scarcity](#)," USAID Global Water Coordinator Chris Holmes told AFP.

"We want to take technology that has already proven it works and use the [grant](#) money to overcome hurdles to get it into countries that no one has bothered or been able to get into, like Sub-Saharan Africa."

Grants were expected to range from \$250,000 to a million dollars for winning proposals.

"It is not just putting up cash; it is making a commitment that we will work closely with them to overcome obstacles in a [developing country](#) to try to build out a new technology," Holmes said.

Grants will be awarded in categories such as improving [water reuse](#) and countering intrusion of salt water into rivers, streams, [deltas](#) or underground aquifers.

"In a finite biosphere, solutions to pressing water challenges require new thinking and innovative financing," Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation Gunilla Carlsson said in a statement.

"Through a catalytic use of aid, Securing Water for Food will be able to capture and support the implementation of innovative ideas and new technologies for better water efficiency and sustainable development."

Water scarcity affects more than 40 percent of the world's population, and approximately 70 percent of fresh [water](#) is used for agriculture,

according to USAID.

"Water scarcity and its impact on food security affect everyone on the planet," said USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah.

"By harnessing the expertise and creativity of the world's brightest innovators, we can tackle this critical challenge with new thinking and partnerships."

USAID and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency will begin accepting grant proposals in early November.

Information about the challenge grant program was available online at securingwaterforfood.org.

"I am really excited about this," Holmes said. "I really think this is something that is going to bear some fruit."

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