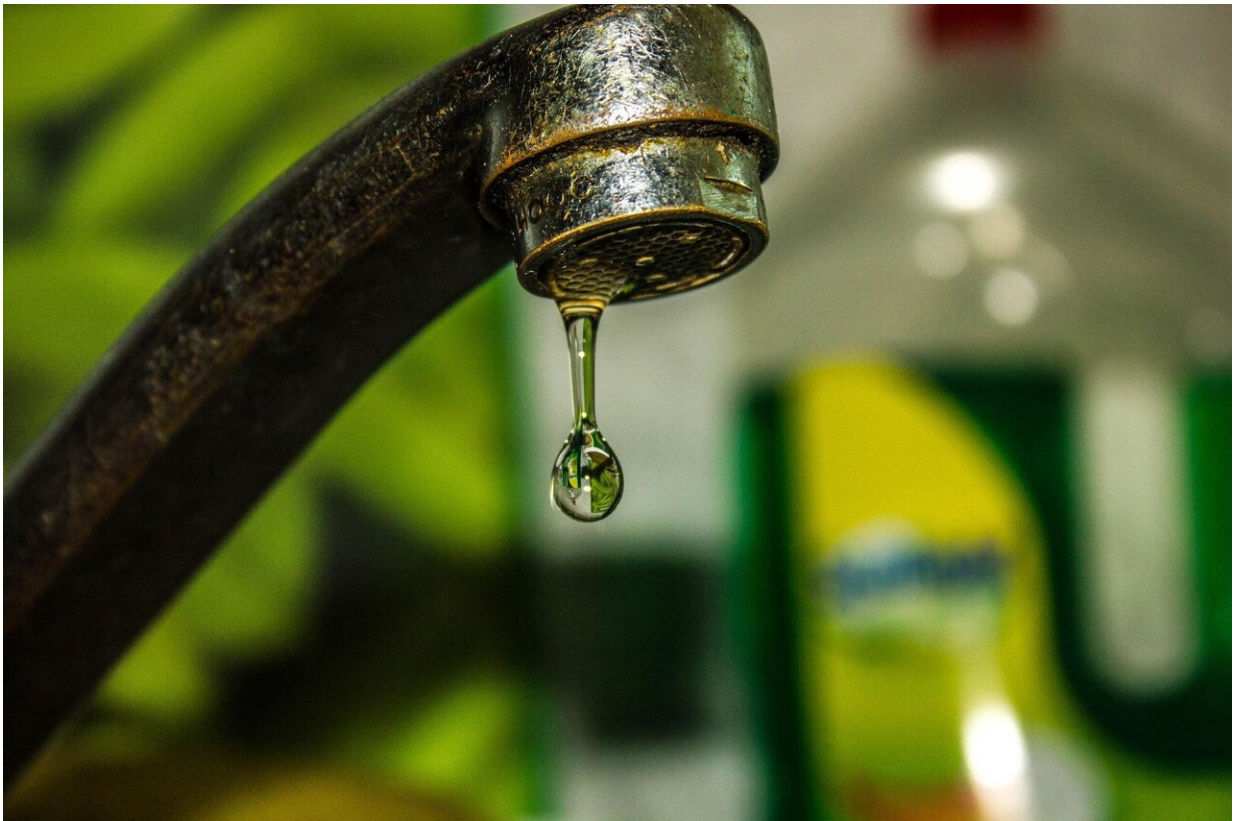


Changing lifestyles in response to the effects of climate change

August 5 2022



High levels of PFAS have been found in drinking water. Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Consumers should be adapting their behavior in a bid to save water during the ongoing dry weather, according to Cranfield University

academics.

Limiting the length of a shower or the amount of bathwater, not leaving taps running, and installing [water](#) saving devices (which many water companies offer for free) are all effective ways to make a difference.

Some commentators have recently speculated the U.K. will experience [drought conditions](#) similar to those of 1976, but Professor Ian Holman, Head of the Center for Water, Environment and Development at Cranfield University, said that was not necessarily the case because of difference in conditions preceding the summer of 1976.

"The 1976 drought was the culmination of almost two very dry years. Rivers, groundwater and reservoir levels in spring 1976 were much lower than at the same time this year. So while this year's dry and hot weather has been similar with effects on our gardens and farming, [water resources](#) in much of the Midlands, south and eastern England started from conditions that were around normal for the time of year."

He added: "Compared to 1976, our water supply infrastructure is also better prepared—in particular, the supply networks are better interconnected than they were in the 1970s, enabling water to be more easily transferred to where it is needed.

"Many farmers who irrigate their crops have constructed on-farm reservoirs since the 1976 drought, which they fill from rivers and aquifers during the winter. However, because the country tends to be affected by drought less frequently than floods, the availability of water is often taken for granted and this means there isn't as much of a water-saving culture as there could be."

Climate change projections have shown there is an increasing risk of extreme weather events such as droughts and heatwaves over time,

Professor Holman added, and irrespective of droughts, "individuals and society should be aiming to use water as efficiently as possible."

"We need to recognize that water is a precious and a scarce natural resource" he said. "We can also make better use of water resources by decreasing leakage and increasing the amount that can be stored in the winter for use in the summer. This could be in encouraging homeowners to install waterbutts; providing [financial support](#) to farmers to invest in on-farm winter storage reservoirs; or for water companies to invest in new reservoirs."

Tim Hess, professor of water and food systems at Cranfield University, explained how a potential [drought](#) could affect crops and food preparation.

"We have had a very dry period towards the end of last year in addition to this summer, which has meant below [average rainfall](#). So you have a situation where the soil is very dry and crops are running out of water, meaning lower crop yields. That's particularly worrying at a time when we know that grain prices are high.

"For [livestock farmers](#) we have got less grass growing meaning they have to buy more feed—something which is more expensive than normal.

"The projections are for us to experience more dry summers with longer dry spells in between rainfall events, so we need to be able to adapt so we can cope with these changing weather conditions."

Provided by Cranfield University

Citation: Changing lifestyles in response to the effects of climate change (2022, August 5)
retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2022-08-lifestyles-response-effects-climate.html>

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