

Drought-hit Jordan to build Red Sea desalination plant

13 June 2021



Jordan is one of the world's most and is facing one of the most severe droughts in its history.

Jordan said Sunday it plans to build a Red Sea desalination plant operating within five years, to provide the mostly-desert and drought-hit kingdom with critical drinking water.

The cost of the project is estimated at "around \$1 billion", ministry of water and irrigation spokesman Omar Salameh told AFP, adding that the plant would be built in the Gulf of Aqaba, in southern Jordan.

The plant is expected to produce 250-300 million cubic meters of potable water per year, and should be ready for operation in 2025 or 2026, Salameh said.

"It will cover the need for drinking water (in Jordan) for the next two centuries," he said, adding that the desalinated water would be piped from Aqaba on the Red Sea to the rest of the country.

Jordan is one of the world's most water-deficient countries and experts say the country, home to 10

million people, is now in the grip of one of the most [severe droughts](#) in its history.

Thirteen international consortiums have put in bids, and the government will chose five of them by July, Salameh said.

Desalinating water is a major drain of energy, and the companies must suggest how to run the plant in Jordan, which does not have major oil reserves.

Last month Salameh told AFP that Jordan needs about 1.3 billion cubic metres of water per year.

But the quantities available are around 850 to 900 million cubic metres, with the shortfall "due to low rainfall, [global warming](#), [population growth](#) and successive refugee inflows", he said.

This year, the reserves of key drinking [water](#) dams have reached critical levels, many now a third of their normal capacity.

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APA citation: Drought-hit Jordan to build Red Sea desalination plant (2021, June 13) retrieved 25 September 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-06-drought-hit-jordan-red-sea-desalination.html>

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