

China intends to clean up rural water

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China's central government says it will spend \$500 million to improve drinking water quality in the nation's rural areas.

A lack of treatment facilities forces more than 300 million farmers, 37.5 percent of China's rural population, to struggle to obtain safe drinking water, Gao Juncai, director of the National Development and Reform Commission's Department of Rural Economy, told the fifth World Water Congress in Beijing Monday.

He said the central government's allocation is expected to help half of the affected people change their water supplies by the end of 2010, The China Daily reported.

A lack of water treatment facilities is also blamed for frequent recent epidemics. Last year, in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in South China, at least 150 epidemics of typhoid, dysentery and diarrhea were reported, with more than 80 percent identified as a result of people drinking polluted water, Xinhua China's official news agency, said.

Aside from water pollution, China is also facing water supply shortages. It uses 7 percent of global fresh water resources to support 21 percent of the world's population.

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