HOW CAN OUR BLUE PLANET BE RUNNING OUT OF FRESH WATER?

Video transcript: Introduction with Prof Iain Stewart

PROF IAIN STEWART:

We call Earth the blue planet for a reason – there's an awful lot of water on it, more than a billion trillion litres, in fact.

Of course, only a tiny proportion of that is water clean enough that you can drink or put on your crops.

I mean if this bottle here represented all the water on our planet… once you ignore the salty water in the sea and the water locked up in ice… that leaves us with a tiny drop of accessible fresh water – less than one hundredth of one percent of what we started with.

Yet that tiny fraction has to meet an unprecedented demand – to quench the thirst and grow the food for the planet's seven billion strong population – often in the face of growing pollution and contamination.

In just 15 years' time, roughly half the planet's population will be living in areas of high water stress. In other words for them, there won't be enough water to go around.

There's so much seawater all around us. One solution is to convert this salty brine into clean, fresh, drinking water.

Current methods of doing this aren't very efficient or sustainable, but we're tantalisingly close. Can we find a way to revolutionise this process – and solve the water crisis before we really run dry?

Banner image courtesy of Getty Images.

Step 6 background image courtesy of Getty Images.

Step 7 image of desert courtesy of Getty Images.