

Should we limit everyone's bread as well as water?

I could scarce believe my ears when I heard there is talk of a limit being placed on how much water each one of us should be invited to use. Water is the staff of life. It is difficult to predict how much water you need for cleaning or cooking. I thought it was agreed that as water is so fundamental special care is taken to ensure we all have access to a good supply in our homes and places of work.

No-one argues that with strong growth in our population we could run out of bread in a few years time. They do not point out that baking more bread and putting in more ovens will entail burning more fuel and creating more emissions. They do not advocate a bread allowance, to ensure we control the total and at the same time allow fair shares for all.

We do not do so for a very good reason. The market can take care of future demand. There is no need to interrupt individual choice. I do not eat a loaf of bread at the expense of my neighbour. There are enough loaves at affordable prices for both of us. Bread supply expands to fill the shopping baskets available.

The same should be true of water. Water is a resource in massive supply. Much of the surface area of our planet is taken up by huge quantities of water. You do not destroy the water by using it, but return it to the water cycle after use for reuse. It is the ultimate renewable. If we allowed full competition to supply domestic water as we now allow for commercial water, supply would expand to meet the demand. Let's do just that.

Water is a good growth product. Let's clean, store and use more of it. If we need an additional reservoir, put it in. If mending leaking pipes is cheaper, do that. There is no need to ration.