



Press Release

다시, 대한민국!
새로운 국민의 나라

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
01/10/23

Contact: Chang Gam, Deputy Director
Water Use Planning Division / +82-(0)44-201-7116
Foreign Media Contact: Chun Minjo(Rachel)
+82-(0)44-201-6055 / rachelmchun@korea.kr

The Ministry of Environment to support desalination projects

Environment Ministry tries to reach an export goal and solve the drought with a desalination project

- The Minister of Environment visited a promising water industrial site in the southern part of the country and checked drought conditions there –

Sejong, January 10 – The Ministry of Environment (Minister Han Wha-jin) announced that the ministry would support desalination projects to increase exports and respond to the current drought. On January 5, Environment Minister Han Wha-jin visited POSCO's Gwangyang steel mill and the Sueo dam. During her visit, she looked around the desalination plant and discussed ways to boost exports further. While visiting the Sueo dam, the minister conducted the on-site inspection of a drought in the southern part of the country. During the policy briefing to the President held on January 3, the Ministry of Environment announced that it would support seawater desalination projects and export them to the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia through customized ways to meet the demands of the relevant industries. The customized ways include launching the public-private green industry export alliance, holding high-level bilateral meetings, and holding sessions to present prospective technologies. The seawater desalination market is expected to grow from KRW 18.5 trillion in 2018 to KRW 25.8 trillion in 2025.

Gwangyang steel mill's seawater desalination plant has produced industrial water from seawater since 2014. The company has accumulated know-how in the operation of a desalination plant. Thus, it is expected to be a stepping stone to entering the global seawater desalination market. The plant produces 27 thousand tons of industrial water from seawater every day. The amount is more than 10% of Gwangyang Steel Mill's daily water use of 241 thousand tons (average in December) and equivalent to half of Gwangyang city's daily supply of water (56 thousand tons).

Environment Minister Han Wha-jin looked around the desalination plant. While she visited the plant, the minister asked the persons concerned to make their utmost efforts to utilize desalination technology to combat drought and make the technology an opportunity to enter foreign markets such as the Middle East, where water is scarce.

After she visited the desalination plant, Environment Minister Han visited the Sueo Dam. The Sueo Dam, managed by the K-water, is for supplying water. The Sueo Dam has 31 million tons of total water storage capacity and provides residential and industrial water to Gwangyang and the Gwangyang industrial complex. The Sueo dam currently has 82% of the water storage capacity, 26 million tons.

As of December 31, 2022, accumulated precipitation around Yeongsangang river basin and Seomjingang river basin was 858mm, 62.6% of the accumulated precipitation of the previous year. The drought in the southern part of the country has been prolonged. Except for the Sueo Dam, the water storage capacity of other dams around the region, including Juam Dam, Seomjingang Dam, Pyeongrim Dam, and Dongbok Dam, is between 18% to 32%. For two days from December 22, 2022, Gwangju Metropolitan City and Jeollanam-do had a lot of snow, up to 40cm, but precipitation was only 11.8mm. Average or less-than-normal rainfall is expected until February 2023; drought is projected to continue in the country's southern part.

The Ministry of Environment plans to manage water demand and take countermeasures to secure water supply in preparation for the prolonged drought while it takes existing measures against drought. First, the ministry will strengthen its measures to manage the water demand by signing 'controlling water supply by saving water voluntarily' with thirteen cities and guns in Gwangju Metropolitan City and Jeollanam-do. In addition, the ministry plans to secure water for Dongbok Dam by installing an emergency aqueduct that supplies water from the Yeongsangan river to the Yongyeon water filtration plant in Gwangju.

Environment Minister Han Wha-jin said, "To overcome the drought in the southern part of the country, residents and companies should actively participate in saving water, and the government should take measures to secure water." She added, "The Ministry of Environment will also do its best not to enforce restrictive water rationing, which may cause the residents inconvenience. The ministry will also avoid incurring a severe economic loss in the Yeosu and Gwangyang industrial complexes."