

Routine exercise led to water group

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CAPE TOWN — Nestlé group chairman Peter Brabeck-Letmathe initiated the process that led to the formation of the Water Resources Group during his previous incarnation as CEO, after conducting a routine corporate exercise to identify the most critical issues affecting the company's long-term sustainability.

"It turned out to be water," he said yesterday. "To my astonishment I realised that we are living, today already, in a global water crisis. The supply side is fixed but demand is

increasing exponentially, which means we have to focus on the matter of efficiency."

Mr Brabeck-Letmathe said he managed to enlist the support of like-minded company executives in Davos five years ago and the upshot was an analysis report by management consultancy McKinsey on the world's most important water sources and the sustainability of their exploitation.

The Water Resources Group will work through the government in SA, but Mr Brabeck-Letmathe says the private sector can contribute by sharing ideas, technology and best

practice in water conservation.

Nestlé has set the benchmark in SA at its Mossel Bay plant, which processes about 350 000l of fresh milk a day to produce 20 000 tons of powdered and liquid milk products a year. Water consumption was halved at the plant during the 12 months to September last year through an investment of just R2m to make better use of "cow's water", the condensate byproduct of the industrial process. The condensate is now used in industrial processes such as cooling towers, boilers and the washing of vehicles.

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