Africa: satellites show sharp decrease in water
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BEIJING, Dec. 13 (Xinhuanet) -- Two orbiting satellites that measure the gravitational pull of water above and below the Earth's surface reveal sharp decreases in Africa during the past five years, scientists said Tuesday in San Francisco.

"This is the first time we have been able to track these variations," Jay Famiglietti, an Earth system sciences professor at the University of California, Irvine, told the fall meeting of the American Geophysical Union. "It's a very sensitive indicator of climate change."

Launched in 2002, the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment satellites, or GRACE, measure water above and below the Earth's surface that are in constant flux.

The nearly five-year-old partnership between NASA and the German Aerospace Center has found during a three-year period water that storage along the Congo River Basin has decreased by nearly double the amount Africans consume annually, excluding irrigation, Famiglietti said.

The GRACE data also found drying along the Zambezi and Nile basins in Africa, and increases along the American Mississippi and Colorado River basins.

"We know that things go up and down, so there is no cause for alarm," Famiglietti said,
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Source

GRACE earlier this year showed Greenland's massive ice sheet is melting much quicker than estimated and that the Antarctic ice sheet was shrinking significantly. Many scientists are more concerned about these ice melting trends, in which they say global warming plays a significant role.

(Agencies)

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