

# Regional building code a must for sustainability

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**SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:** Desalinated water could be better rated in energy units rather than separately, alongside energy units.

**Green building rating systems across the GCC are failing to address regional concerns, according to the Emirates Green Building Council (EGBC).**

Current systems, which include the US-based Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (Leed) and UK-based Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (Breeam), have been branded unsuitable for their failure to account for regional conditions, including the harsh climate and limited fresh water.

In response, the EGBC is devising a system that will overhaul all current codes for rating a building's environmental sustainability. The new system will be tailored to regional conditions to make it more suitable for adoption across the UAE. But the new system does not address calls to rate water and energy use together.

Sarfraz Dairkee, EGBC water and energy sub committee chairman, said: "The present Leed system allocates 69 points for new construction.

"Out of this, five points are allocated to water efficiency. In this part of the world, however, water is very precious for many reasons. Our rating system has been adapted from 5 points for water to 12 points, which is a substantially huge jump.

Alex Leonard, special advisor on the marine environment to the RTA Marine Agency, said: "Whether this is effective depends what kind of water we are talking about.

"If it is desalinated water, it would be better to rate it in terms of energy units than to split water and energy into two separate issues.

Water for human consumption in the GCC is mainly produced through the process of desalination, an expensive, energy-intensive process that generates 5.5kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per m<sup>3</sup> of water.

The revision is in the pipeline, but there is no decision as to what the system will be called.

"What we want to call it is a rather sensitive issue," said Dairkee.