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EARTH Magazine: Virtual Water: Tracking the Unseen Water in Goods and Resources

Alexandria, Va. — “Virtual water” was coined in 1993 to help explain why long-predicted water wars driven by water and food security had not occurred among the arid nations of the Middle East and North Africa. The virtual water notion refers basically to the total amount of freshwater, either from rainfall or irrigation, used in the production of food commodities, including crops and fodder-fed livestock, or other goods and services — agricultural, industrial or otherwise. Taking root in the late 1990s across a range of disciplines, the concept has since expanded and evolved.

Today, virtual water has been cited by many as a potentially valuable tool for influencing trade and water policies to promote conservation and combat water scarcity. Trading in virtual water between water-rich and water-poor regions has been suggested as a means to allay water scarcity. Read more about how the virtual water concept has gained a foothold among a number of governments and multinational businesses in the October issue of EARTH magazine: <http://bit.ly/1uv02xb>.

For more stories about the science of our planet, check out EARTH magazine online or subscribe at www.earthmagazine.org. The October issue, now available on the digital newsstand, features stories following a group of volcanologists as they venture to an erupting volcano in Guatemala to learn its secrets, detailing how Hawaii’s Kilauea volcano can shift from mild to wild eruptions, and explaining how the Spanish invasion altered the Peruvian coastline, plus much, much more.

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Keep up to date with the latest happenings in Earth, energy and environment news with EARTH Magazine online at: <http://www.earthmagazine.org>. Published by the American Geosciences Institute, EARTH is your source for the science behind the headlines.

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