

# VIRTUAL WATER

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**I**T is often said that future wars will be fought over water, not oil. Indeed, at least 1,473 instances of violence, conflicts and water-related issues have been reported worldwide between 1990 and 2023 (*Down To Earth*, 22 March 2024). About two-thirds of all water-related conflicts since 1990 occurred in the past decades. Water conflicts can occur both on the intrastate and interstate levels. Interstate conflicts occur between two or more countries that share transboundary freshwater sources, such as river, sea, or groundwater basins.

Because freshwater is a vital yet unevenly distributed natural source, its inadequate availability inevitably often influences the living, economic conditions and, above all, insecure food and nutritional security of a country or region.

Most of the time, we tend to believe that our water consumption is limited to the water we use in its physical or 'visible' form for drinking, cooking, washing, bathing, etc. How can we think and explain that water remains 'hidden' form in the products and services we buy and processes we use every