

Interactive comment on “Water saving through international trade of agricultural products” by A. K. Chapagain et al.

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Received and published: 20 May 2006

The paper by Chapagain et al. provides interesting quantifications of virtual water flows between countries and of potential water savings. The authors incorporated most of the elaborate comments and suggestions by the first reviewer, Leon Hermans. One of the interesting issues raised by Hermans focused on the difficulty of making a realistic assessment of the opportunity cost of blue and green water. The second review was done by the scholar who coined the virtual water concept, Professor Tony Allan. His very positive review found that the paper provided an important increment in the development of this concept. He suggested as a future research area the impact of producing more bio-fuel on real and virtual water flows. I find this a valuable contribution,

and I would like to suggest another area. The gradual removal of market distortions by the European Union, and the concomitant reduction of preferential quota for developing countries of products such as sugar, may result in significant shifts in cropping patterns with large effects on local water use as well as on global virtual water flows. It would be worthwhile to estimate the consequences for water. In the context of sugar a decrease in global virtual water fluxes may possibly occur, whereby sugar from cane that is currently exported as a sweetener from the South to the North converts to a source of fuel that is consumed locally. This may not save any water, but it may save the planet!

In all, it may be concluded that the revised paper is a significant contribution to the analysis of global water issues.

Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 2, 2219, 2005.

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