

## ***Interactive comment on “The water footprint of Indonesian provinces related to the consumption of crop products” by F. Bulsink et al.***

**P. van der Zaag (Editor)**

p.vanderzaag@unesco-ihe.org

Received and published: 10 October 2009

The paper by Bulsink et al. that estimates the water footprint of agricultural crops in Indonesian provinces has triggered two quite critical, but carefully argued, referee comments. These comments question certain aspects of the water footprint and virtual water concepts. I would like to encourage the authors of the paper to adequately address these comments, where possible to refute them, and otherwise to adapt the manuscript.

In the humid tropical Indonesian climate, crops have a predominantly green water footprint. And this raises some pertinent issues. What is the policy relevance of the water footprint and virtual water analysis in a case where largely green water is involved,  
C2327

which, as the second reviewer notes, has often a relatively small, and sometimes even a negative (!), net value. The significance of the paper would greatly increase if it would put this question upfront as a fundamental issue of inquiry, and discuss it thoroughly. This could in fact be an opportunity to further refine the water footprint concept.

The first reviewer rightfully cautions against extending conclusions and deductions beyond the realm of the analysis conducted. I agree: we researchers should maintain an appropriate level of modesty in this respect!

The second reviewer raises the issue of the “bluntness” of the water footprint concept as a policy tool, and challenges the authors as follows: “If the scale of the analysis is decreased, the level of information must necessarily increase if the uncertainties in the analysis are to be minimised.” I would suggest that the authors explicitly address this important observation.

The reviewers make many more valuable suggestions. I invite the authors to carefully consider all these comments and to submit a response, detailing all issues raised.

---

Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 6, 5115, 2009.