

Importing water, exporting drought?

Challenge Overview Sheet

Water is fundamental for human life. Naturally there is enormous variability in its availability and societies where water is scarce have learned to adapt to life with low river flows and scarcity of rainfall. However, a series of changes threaten the equilibrium that has existed, bringing the spectre of **water scarcity** to many places. These changes include population growth and new lifestyle pressures that place greater demands per capita on water supplies. In an interconnected and globalised world, it is also the case that some places increasingly suffer from low water supplies for indigenous people on account of agricultural and manufacturing activities serving people in distant societies, spatially removed from the sites where **water insecurity** is developing.

Like climate change, energy security issues and the recent food crisis, this is a global challenge for which many causes and consequences can be documented but where no 'catch-all' solution yet exists – although increasing numbers of businesses and individuals are at least starting to question and partly reduce their own real and 'virtual' water usage.

In the film clips that accompany this scheme of work, Robin Farrington from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) discusses the importance of water as a resource – and the dangers we face in the future from its misuse. He has a key role at WWF where he advises on the UK's water footprint. Andy Wales, Head of Sustainable Development for SABMiller, discusses the importance of water in the production of beer at SABMiller, with reference to operations in South Africa. Watching these talks, a picture of water insecurity emerges with causes as diverse as:

- Population growth and rising demand
- Rising affluence and changes in demand
- Climate change
- Transnational Corporations chasing profit
- Coastal (estuarine) flooding

Exam Board

Focus These materials support the teaching of:

Edexcel Unit 1 & 3
globalisation &
water conflicts

AQA Unit 1 & 3 –
river environments
& development and
globalisation

OCR Unit 3 –
population and
resources

WJEC Unit 4 –
sustainable water
supply

Such information is relevant to AS / A2-level students for all of the major exam boards, whether their course places emphasis on the study of hydrological systems or on sustainability concerns (notably in relation to globalisation and natural resource use).

For gifted and talented geographers chasing a high-grade qualification , there is plenty of opportunity for critical thinking and evaluation. Our experts can be watched debating the concept of **virtual water** and its ethical implications – all of which can be stretching stuff to think about!