

IT TAKES A RIVER

Between global-warming-induced droughts and a growing world population, water is becoming an increasingly scarce commodity. But water use is about far more than drinking and bathing. The examples below illustrate "virtual water content," the amount—in gallons—required to produce various items. They're from a report by UNESCO's

Institute for Water Education, which suggests that water-scarce countries might relieve pressure on their own resources by importing goods with a high virtual water content. Beef is one of the thirstiest products, beer happily not so much. Read the full report at www.waterfootprint.org/reports/hoekstra_and_chapagain_2006.pdf. —Paul Rauber



FIGURES ARE IN GALLONS

ABOVE: DEBBIE DIRCHISLER BELLOW: JOSEF GAST