

Embodied H2O

Have you ever thought about how the food at the grocery store ended up sitting on the shelf? Or how much energy or water it took for that food to grow, and how far it traveled? These are things we should be more conscious about in our lives because water is a finite resource, and one we are running out of.

According to [Brigitte Decrausaz Federal Office for Agriculture Switzerland](#) embodied water or virtual water is, "Water required for producing a unit of product (crops, meat, etc.) [m³/kg]." Virtual water measures the amount of water that went into producing a specific product. In the same article by the Swiss, they came up with an annual per capita water needs for food for a 2500 Kcal day. For someone who consumes 20% meat, water use is 1200-1500 meters cubed. For a vegetarian 500- 1000 meters cubed (more than double). Eating no meat saves more water as we can clearly see from these numbers. The Office of Agriculture Switzerland also states that, "10 times more water is needed per unit of energy from meat than from plants."

Being aware of the virtual water (embodied water in food) allows us to see what foods use more water, and where we can save water as well. According to [faircompanies.com](#), "The average piece of food in the United States travels over 1000 miles from farm to plate." If you incorporate all the food you eat in a day, you will see that all the food you eat costs loads of water. When we see these statistics we can see why buying local, or growing your own food can conserve water on a local level. The food doesn't have to travel as far and you don't have to package the food or do anything extra that uses more water.

Being mindful of the amount of water used in food production, packaging, and travel really puts into perspective how much water we can save by buying and growing locally. These are easy things you can do in order to conserve water. There is also a website you can go to called the [water footprint network](#), where you can enter the amount of food you eat and it will calculate your embodied water footprint. Also this video does a great job of outlining some of the [water-food-energy-nexus](#).