

**We Are Exporter  
No.5 Of The  
Commodity**



# Sold! Waters of India

## It Takes 21,000 Litres To Make 1 Kg Of Coffee

By Amit Bhandari/TNN

**New Delhi:** Here are some amazing facts about water. It is by far the largest traded commodity in the world. The size of global trade in water could be 300 times the next largest commodity. India is the fifth largest exporter of water. Surprised? Well there's a bit a virtual reality involved here; it's very real at the same time.

Let's spin the riddle a little more. Have you ever wondered how much water went into that cup of coffee that you are sipping? Or tea as the case may be? Before you guess, let's just say 'one cup' is not correct. You also have to include water that went into producing the coffee beans — virtual water. 'Virtual water' is a relatively new term — it was coined just over a decade back. Producing goods and services generally requires water. The water used in the production process of an agricultural or industrial product is called the 'virtual water' contained in the product.

In a paper on that subject, A J Hoekstra, coordinator of a Unesco sponsored programme on virtual water research estimates the virtual

water content of wheat as 1,200 litres per kilo. In other words, 1,200 litres of water is required to produce 1 kg of wheat. If that sounds a lot, picture 2,700 litres of water for 1 kg of rice. On the other hand, potatoes with virtual

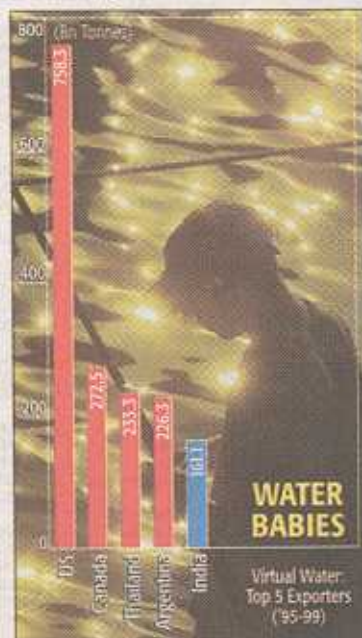
try frets about the possibility of a poor monsoon. One of the possible answers to our collective water problems may be to deliberately target products that have lower 'virtual water' content.

Thus, a water scarce country can choose to import products that require a lot of water rather than producing them domestically.

Global trade in 'virtual water' on account of agricultural commodities was estimated to be 695 billion tons every year. This far outstrips the volume of global trade in crude oil — about 2.26 billion tons per annum.

US is the top exporter of 'virtual water'. India also features amongst the big exporters — probably due to the large volume of agricultural commodities exported. Thus, when we export food-grains or agri-products, we also export our water.

As for that cup of coffee, Hoekstra has estimated that it requires about 21,000 litres of water to produce 1 kg of coffee. So a standard cup of coffee requires 140 litres of water — depending upon how strong you like it. Tea requires only 1/8th of that. So next time you want to save water, you know what to do.



content of 160 litres are very water friendly.

Water has been in the limelight over the past few days for more than one reason. Cities reel from water shortages and states fight over water. The whole coun-

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