

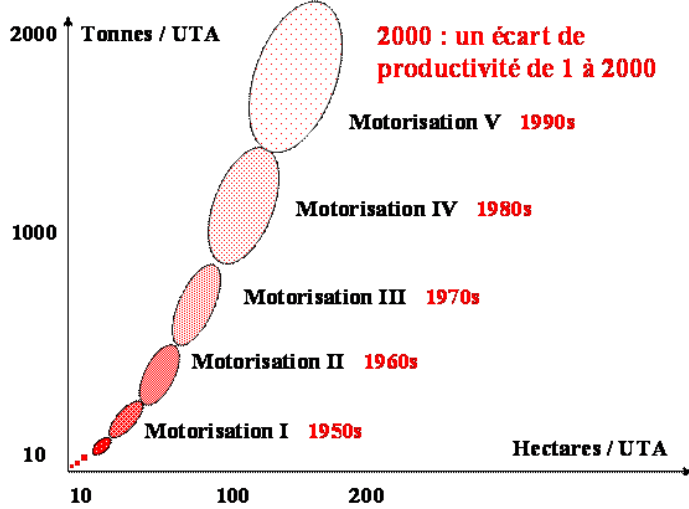
Strategic Workshop Water and Trade

Contribution from Daniel Zimmer

25-26 November, Amsterdam

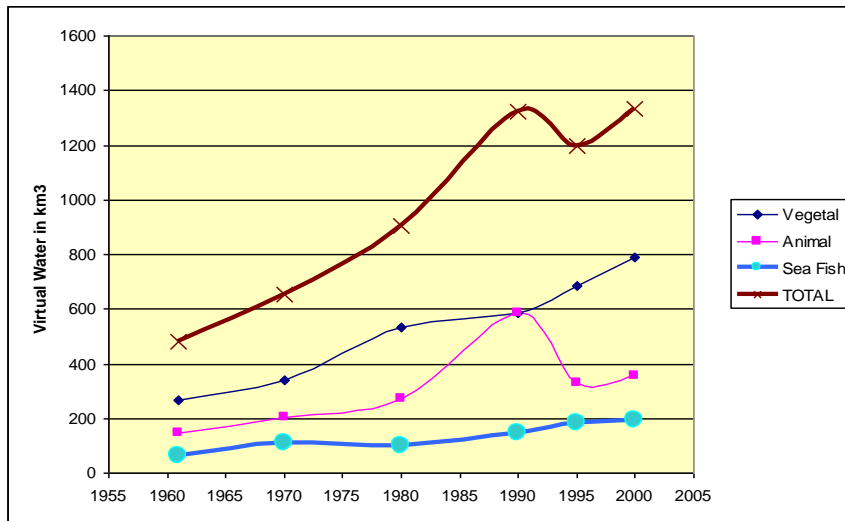
- Background and associated questions/issues
- Proposals and associated questions

Progress in agricultural labour productivity in developing countries..



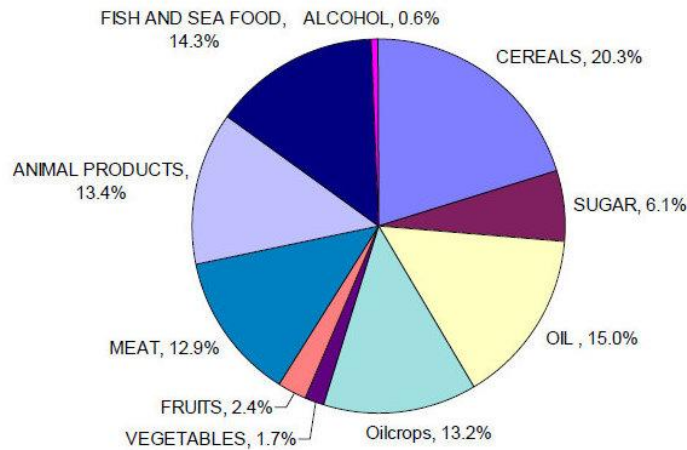
From Mazoyer, 2007

Estimated evolution of international virtual water trade



From Zimmer and Renault, 2002

International virtual water trade of food products in 2000.



From Zimmer and Renault, 2002

Some methodological issues and knowledge gaps

- Methods utilised to estimate the embedded water contents in various conditions differ significantly between authors.
need of standardization or of serious comparative analysis to ensure that published estimates can be compared
- Interlinked concepts of virtual water and water footprints introduce additional complexity in the analysis
- Potential savings allowed by virtual water trade have been documented but
are the results of these studies are meaningful?
- Potential impacts of trade regulations on virtual water trade are unknown: could certain rules increase water efficiency?
- The way water scarcity impacts (or benefits from) trade and the amount of virtual water traded because of water scarcity remain largely unknown

Lesson and question 1

Water scarce countries cannot reach food sovereignty with the current agricultural practices. Whatever their progress in water management and in agriculture, they will import increasing quantities and proportions of their food.

Few of these countries are ready to recognize this (except perhaps Tunisia), to hide their vulnerability?

Various approaches are already implemented (trade agreements, comparative advantages...)

What types of approaches could be recommended to them? Should they cooperate and join forces in negotiating trade agreements with exporting countries?

Lesson and question 2

Relying on food trade for their food security is risky for developing countries:

- food price volatility puts social stability at risk, even more so with urbanisation.
- local farmers of developing countries may be placed in a poverty trap which may further prevent the development of local agriculture and increase further the food insecurity

Enhanced cooperation and trade agreements between countries having comparable agricultural productivities could be (part of) the solution

Could cooperation agreements be developed in large international basins (noting complementarities between upstream and downstream areas)

How could water and trade communities best work together to investigate the feasibility and potential benefits of such trade agreements? What steps need to be taken to convince political leaders to embark in such ventures?