



Deutscher Tropentag, October 11-13, 2005, Hohenheim

“The Global Food & Product Chain—
Dynamics, Innovations, Conflicts, Strategies”

Is the Watershed the Problemshed? Approaches to Issues of Water Scarcity in Arid Zones

J. ANTHONY ALLAN

University of London, Department of Geography, United Kingdom

Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to emphasise that water problems are often addressed outside the water sector. This is especially true for economies that share watersheds that have insufficient water to meet the needs of an irrigation sector to achieve food security. The analysis will draw attention to the types of water available - soil water and freshwater (surface and groundwater) and virtual water and manufactured water. The very important economically invisible and politically silent processes, which make food and water security possible, will be discussed. These processes are firstly, the utilisation of the surplus soil water in the temperate regions to produce staple grains, secondly the movement of these commodities into water deficit regions with the impact of virtual water, and thirdly the process that enables these first two processes to take place - namely socio-economic development in the water scarce economies. The Jordan Basin is a laboratory which provides very strong evidence that the solutions to water sector problems lie outside the watershed.

Keywords: Jordan Basin, water problems, water security, virtual water