

## **Key water resources statistics in AQUASTAT -FAO's Global Information System on Water and Agriculture**

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**ABSTRACT:** This article describes the methodology used by AQUASTAT to assess natural and actual freshwater resources for the world by country. It deals with renewable water resources and concentrates mainly on the physical assessment of internal and external resources. It presents a picture of the state of the world's water resources, i.e. not only the natural state but also the current situation, taking into account existing uses of water and their implications for countries sharing river basins.

Much remains to be done in order to obtain sound statistics on water resources, and particularly standardized data sets, at global level. This article gives some reflections in this sense. For example, more effort needs to be focussed on the assessment of the variability of water resources in space (basin level), in time (dry-year resources) and according to constraints (exploitable resources). Disaggregated information at river-basin level is particularly important in large countries with very diverse climatic conditions. National averages hide local differences and, for large countries, are of little use for evaluating the country's water situation.

In order to improve the comparability of water information at regional and global level, AQUASTAT has also been working on the development of global GIS-based data sets and modelling tools. The model developed was used for cross-checking the Africa data sets and showed that the combined use of country-based data and global water-balance modelling can enhance the overall reliability of the results. Field-based approaches (based on measurements) and modelling approaches are certainly complementary.