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The Good, the Bad and the Bottled: considerations of the effects of our habits on the water and environment protection

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People are getting even more aware that their lifestyles, habits and choices can affect the environment. One of the natural heritages to pay more attention to is surely the water.

Water, besides being the basis of all natural ecosystems, is also fundamental for everyday life, both as direct consumption and as virtual water. The availability of safe water for drinking purpose varies greatly, depending on both climatic conditions and resource management. The issue of groundwater management, however, must not be limited only to those countries where water scarcity is evident but also where there seems to be water for everyone. For this reason, over the years, various projects have been developed to raise public awareness of water savings. Another issue that recently raised scientists' and civil society's attention is the impact of single use plastic that often becomes a stray – and ubiquitous waste after its first use.

Combining these issues, it was easy for public opinion to find one of the main culprits in bottled waters. The bottled water business is developed at all the latitudes of the world, with China, USA and Mexico as Top Bottled Water Consuming Countries (with a total of approximately 110 billion L/year). At European level the Italy is the first country with approximately 14 billion L/year. The quantity, quality and accessibility to drinking water in Italian homes does not seem to justify a market that involves (in 2018) 255 brands of water for a business of approximately 2.8 billion €. The reasons behind buying bottled water are many and often not justified. The knowledge of our drinking water supply systems and the bottled water industries can lead us to unforeseen conclusions that need to be food for thought on how to improve ourselves and may challenge hydrogeologists for a better engagement in water protection.

Early career hydrogeologists must be a preferential vehicle of both research and educational disclosure to people and to water managers. The achieved scientific results of the qualitative and quantitative status of the groundwater resources should be fundamental tools for a wise management in order to reduce future water crisis. At the same time, the divulgation through the social media and public conferences could increase the awareness and the sensibility of the people to the water protection.

Knowledge is power, and a conscious choice in any case is a better choice.