



**Conference
Agenda**

Chatham House
5-6 February 2026

How global trade can drive fair and sustainable water use

Fair Water Footprints Conference 2026

Hosted at the Royal Institute of International Affairs,
Chatham House, 10 St James's Square, London, SW1Y
4LE, United Kingdom

Overview

Water is the lifeblood of our economies — essential for growing food, producing energy, and manufacturing goods. Hidden within the trade of products and services is an invisible flow of water. Yet, we often overlook its true value, exploiting water sources beyond sustainable limits and polluting them in the process. This is already impacting trade. In the last few years, we have seen the effects of drought on higher prices for grains, olive oil and chocolate as well as transportation routes through the Panama Canal and Rhine River. Competition over water resources can also lead to political strife. Popular protests against water shortages and perceived unfair imposition of new regulation on water have disrupted rice and wheat exports in India, oil exports in Iraq and grain and dairy exports from France. Women, those who are disabled, and other marginalised groups are particularly vulnerable in these circumstances. This is only an indication of what is to come. Rising demand for fresh water under a warming and increasingly volatile climate will amplify the risks for critical supply chains.

Many governments, companies and consumers remain unaware of the water impacts embedded in global supply chains and fail to see the consequences—felt by communities and ecosystems far from where goods are consumed. But this unseen connection also presents an opportunity. By recognizing the role of trade in water security, we can turn it into a force for sustainability. When trading partnerships value water as a shared resource, they can drive better water governance, expand access to clean water, and restore nature.

During this two-day international conference, policymakers, industry leaders, and civil society organizations will come together to address these challenges. Through open discussions and practical workshops, we'll explore solutions that reshape trade as a driver of fair and responsible water use. Discover how businesses, governments, and communities can collaborate to ensure water is protected, shared equitably, and managed sustainably across global value chains.

Agenda

Thursday, 5 February 2026 | The geopolitical context, policy and partnerships

08:30 – 09:00 | Registration

09:00 – 10:00 | Session 1

How can global trade support local water security in an age of geopolitical and climate risks?

Trade is taking place in an increasingly fraught geopolitical and climatic context. The rules are in flux while the risks to critical supply chains – including from environmental breakdown and socio-political unrest – increasingly threaten production and supply. At the same time, legislation such that associated with the EU's Green Deal look to reduce negative human rights and environmental impacts. With a mix of multilateral, bilateral and regional arrangements governing the space, this session will ask:

- How do recent developments such as the Russia-Ukraine war, US tariffs and other events affect space for integrating climate and environmental measures into trade priorities?
- Are there opportunities to increase awareness of the links between traded sectors and water stress?
- What approaches are policymakers taking toward global responsibility for water stewardship? How can we keep these initiatives on track and ensure they are equitable?
- What opportunities for greater stability, do water positive practices and investment in ecosystem regeneration trade partnerships offer, especially for vulnerable communities?

Speaker | Henk Ovink, Executive Director and Founding Commissioner, Global Commission on the Economics of Water

Speaker | Yuvan Beejadhur, Senior Adviser to the Director-General, WTO

Speaker | Madelaine Tuininga, Minister Counsellor for Trade Affairs, Delegation of the European Union to the United Kingdom

Speaker | Sareen Malik, Executive Secretary, African Civil Society Network for Water and Sanitation (ANEW) *Virtual*

Chair | Ana Yang, Director, Environment and Society Centre, Chatham House

10:00 – 11:15 | Session 2

The state of water in global trade

Water is currently not a factor in the way that trade is conducted; and water scarcity and pollution have no correlation with current trade patterns. This session will discuss potential pathways for water to be managed more carefully in trade policies.

- What are the current challenges being experienced in global trade that hinder positive outcomes for water scarcity and pollution?
- What are current opportunities at the WTO that help foster cooperation on sustainability in virtual water in agricultural products, textiles and raw materials? What current plurilateral initiatives, or bilateral or regional trade initiatives can support fair water footprints?
- Are there any trade related measures and supply chain regulations or other due diligence measures emerging that support virtual water trade?

Speaker | Lee Ann Jackson, Head of Programmes, Forum on Trade, Environment and the SDGs (TESS)

Speaker | Chantal Line Carpentier, Head of Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch, UN Trade & Development (UNCTAD) *Virtual*

Speaker | Kaushik Janakiraman, Director, Policy Advocacy and Risk, Reckitt

Speaker | Nick Hepworth, CEO, Water Witness International

Chair | Laura Kelly, Director, Shaping Sustainable Markets, IIED

11:15 – 11:45 | Break

11:45 – 13:00 | Session 3

Producer and consumer country perspectives on the progress in managing water in export-facing production

Recent studies have distinguished between water footprints of production and consumption at the national level. For instance, 55% of the UK's external water footprint is in basins where water risk is unsustainable. This session will bring producer and consumer countries into conversation to raise areas of concern, trends and opportunities for collaboration. It will consider what importing and exporting governments can do to coordinate and share strategies for fair water footprints in the places where food, clothing, metals, and other goods are sourced. Ultimately, the session will ask how we can cooperate to better safeguard supply chains, while still committing to SDG 6 vision.

- What bilateral measures can be taken to incentivize, invest, and build capacity and in supply chains? What types of cooperation are emerging as the most promising? Are legal measures and precedents emerging? Do they provide sufficient accountability and corrective measures?
- What can importer countries do to support important demand side initiatives?
- How can exporters adopt fair water footprint principles in policy and regulation, provide the enabling environment and support inclusive engagement?
- How building a coalition of proactive states willing to coordinate can help navigate tensions and move difficult challenges forward?

Speaker | Antti Rautavaara, Special Envoy for Water, Finland

Speaker | Dr Henrie Manford Njoloma, Secretary for Water Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Water Development, Malawi *Virtual*

Speaker | Younes Laabdi, Head, Water Management Service, Ministry of Equipment and Water, Morocco

Chair | Julio Postigo, Assistant Professor, Indiana University

13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch

14:00 – 15:00 | Session 4a

Financial levers for water resilience in global supply chains

This session provides a deep dive into the investor perspective and examine the water metrics that matter to capital markets. Speakers will deconstruct the ‘monolithic’ view of finance, hearing directly from diverse actors including central banks, large asset managers, and credit rating agencies, on how they approach valuing water to build resilient supply chains.

- How do supply chain risks translate into financial risks?
- What does company disclosure tell us about drivers of change? What is the role of disclosure frameworks and how do they shape capital allocation?
- How are investors integrating water risk into their decision-making?
- What innovative finance models are emerging and what is driving their success?

Speaker | Ram Sri, Vice President, Sustainable Finance – Credit Moody’s

Speaker | Luke Sussams, Head of Sustainability and Transition Strategy, EMEA, Jefferies

Speaker | Lylah Davies, Policy Analyst, OECD

Speaker | Ella Lazarte, CEO, Resilient Water Accelerator

Chair | [Joe Ray](#), Head of Water, CDP

15:00 – 15:15 | Break, move to breakout rooms

15:15 – 16:15 | Session 4b

Breakout: How can financial actors better integrate water resilience? *In person only*

Participants will divide into small groups and reflect on the main themes of the session, exploring how the different financial actors can better integrate water resilience into their decision-making. Each group will focus on a specific stakeholder perspective (e.g., banks, credit rating agency) and insights from the groups will be shared after.

16:15 – 17:00 | Session 5

Closing plenary

Sum up of key successes, learnings and questions to take through to the following day.

Speaker | [Ana Yang](#), Director, Environment and Society Centre, Chatham House

17:00 – 18:00 | Networking reception for participants

Friday, 6 February 2026 | Implementation and action

09:30 – 10:00 | Registration

10:00 – 10:15 | Session 6

Recap from day 1

Speaker | [Nick Hepworth](#), CEO, Water Witness International

10:15 – 11:15 | Session 7

Demonstrating progress towards Fair Water Footprints

The Fair Water Footprints initiative – a partnership of governments, private sector and civil society – was launched at COP26 and aims to make sustainable water use the global business norm. This session will hear from Signatories and partners on the importance of delivering Fair Water Footprints, and opportunities or challenges that have emerged through their work. We will highlight critical enabling conditions and insights into practical implementation from across the partnership.

- What has happened since 2021? Where has there been greatest traction and why? What are the obstacles to greater progress?
- What other national water governance frameworks, multilateral and bilateral trade provisions, regulation and agreements are addressing or expected to address water use in global supply chains?
- What does best practice in collective business action and community engagement around water security look like?
- Where have we secured key wins for progressing Fair Water Footprints?

Speaker | Dr Rick Hogeboom, Executive Director, Water Footprint Network; Multidisciplinary Water Management Group, University of Twente

Speaker | Herbert Kasililah, Chairperson, Shahidi wa Maji

Speaker | Mai-Lan Ha, Director of Private Sector Policy & Advocacy, WaterAid

Speaker | Will McManus, Sector Specialist, WRAP

Chair | Nick Hepworth, CEO, Water Witness International

11:15 – 11:30 | Break

11:30 – 12:45 | Session 8a

Frontier issues for Fair Water Footprints: How to ensure fair water use in key supply chains in an uncertain geopolitical landscape?

How can we drive transformative action to tackle to secure responsible water stewardship across ‘thirsty’ sectors in the face of an evolving geopolitical landscape? In this session, speakers will share insights on the barriers and opportunities to deliver transformative action on water security, social equity and climate resilience – and the tools needed to deliver these. This session will be followed by breakout discussions where participants will debate the issues more deeply and co-create opportunities for collaboration.

- In light of climate change, trade disruption, and geopolitical shifts – what are the barriers and opportunities to mitigate water risks, and realise progress, across supply chains?
- What actions, reforms and policy interventions can accelerate progress towards fair water footprints
- What’s needed for transformative action on water, and what are the critical influencing moments in 2026?

Speaker | Dave Tickner, Chief Adviser – Rivers & Water, WWF-UK

Speaker | Lexi Parfitt, Director of Public and Political Engagement, Water Witness International

Speaker | **Barbara Schreiner**, Director, Water Integrity Network

Speaker | **Suvi-Tuuli Puharinen**, Senior Researcher, Centre for Climate Change, Energy and Environmental Law, University of Eastern Finland

Chair | **Alan Nicol**, Principal Researcher, IWMI

12:45 – 13:45 | Lunch

13:45 – 15:00 | Session 8b

Breakout: Learning sessions *In person only*

Following morning discussions, participants will break out into groups to discuss opportunities for accelerating progress towards Fair Water Footprints across three critical areas on raising Fair Water Footprints up the public and political agenda; the global regulatory and policy architecture; and how to ensure “fair” in Fair Water Footprints. Inputs will help to shape Fair Water Footprints and wider partner strategies in the coming years.

- **Raising Fair Water Footprints up the political and public agenda**
 - What opportunities and approaches can shift awareness to action?
 - How can the value, reach and impact of Fair Water Footprints be maximised?
 - How can focus on water be sustained in a polarised and unpredictable political and media landscape?
- **The global regulatory and policy architecture for Fair Water Footprints**
 - Are trade agreements an effective vehicle for driving FWF, and what other global governance mechanisms are needed to embed sustainable and equitable water use in trade?
 - How can the legality of water use within supply chains be incentivised and enforced?
 - What is the role of domestic corporate due diligence legislation and of Regional Economic Communities in driving action for FWF?
- **Putting the “fair” in Fair Water Footprints**
 - What mechanisms can ensure inclusive participation, balanced representation, and socially just outcomes in initiatives on water?
 - How can businesses be incentivized or compelled to report on the fulfilment of the human rights to water and sanitation within their supply chains – at work and at home?
 - How can voluntary standards be strengthened to better protect and promote human rights to water and sanitation?

15:00 – 15:30 | Session 9

Closing plenary

[Speaker](#) | **Shomy Chowdhury**, Co-Founder Awareness 360



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Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, is a world-leading policy institute based in London. Our mission is to help governments and societies build a sustainably secure, prosperous and just world.

The Fair Water Footprints partnership is working to transform how the global economy interacts with, and values, water. By bringing to life and mainstreaming the concept of a ‘fair water footprint’, we can support trading nations, businesses and civil society to shape a more resilient, just and water-secure world.



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Charity Registration Number: 208223

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