


Whizzy methods help investors spot water risk

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▼ whizzy

used to describe something, especially a piece of technology, that is new and clever, and that works well

技术上创新的, 高技术的...

From a small office in Montreal an artificial-intelligence business, Aquantix, plays **sleuth** for faraway investors worried about water risk. Its model combines **high-resolution satellite imagery**, **weather-station** data and **regulatory** documents scraped from the internet. It estimates not only how much water a business uses at its various sites but its water bill, the chances of drought or flooding in surrounding areas and the financial impact such disasters could have—all without contacting the company in question.

▼ sleuth

detective 侦探

▼ high-resolution satellite imagery

- resolution 分辨率
- satellite imagery 卫星图像

▼ weather-station

气象站

▼ regulatory

监管的

Firms like Aquantix are proving useful to investors **waking up to** water risk. At current rates of

▼ waking up to

意识到...

consumption, the demand for water worldwide will be 40% greater than its supply by 2030, according to the UN. Portfolio managers are realizing that physical, reputational and regulatory water risk could hurt their investments, particularly in thirsty industries such as food, mining, **textiles** and **utilities**.

- ▼ textile
纺织业
- ▼ utility
公共事业

One worry is that shocks to supply could drown or **dry out** a company's **assets**. In recent years Coca-Cola has been forced to close plants in India because of drought. In 2019 floods in America's Midwest caused **disruptions** at the **facilities** of two food giants, Cargill and Tyson Foods. A survey by CDP, a non-profit firm, found that 783 big listed companies had faced a total of \$40bn of water-related losses in 2018.

- ▼ dry out
耗尽
- ▼ asset
资产
- ▼ disruption
破坏 n.
disruptive adj.
- ▼ facility
设备、设施

Another concern is that the price a company pays for water could **rocket**. The market price of water does not reflect the environmental and social costs of using it. Government **subsidies** also mean that companies often do not pay for its true cost. As **aquifers** are **depleted**, though, subsidies could become more costly and unpopular, forcing governments to **retract** them. s&p Global Trucost, a data provider, **reckons** that if Fortune 500 companies paid the true cost of water, based on estimates of

- ▼ rocket
激增
- ▼ subsidy
subsidies 津贴、（政府）补贴
- ▼ aquifer
含水层、蓄水层
- ▼ deplete
枯竭、耗尽
- ▼ retract
撤回、撤销、拉回、取消
- ▼ reckon

scarcity, rather than current prices, their profit margins would shrink by a tenth. margins for food, drink and tobacco firms would fall by three-quarters.

- **establish by calculation:**
calculate, compute, work out
计算
- **consider or regard in a specified way:** regard as, consider, judge 认为

Disclosures of water risk are even patchier than those of greenhouse-gas emissions. In part, that is because it is more difficult to measure. Emitting a ton of carbon dioxide in the Sahara or in London has the same environmental impact. Using a gallon of water does not. Place-specific data can be commercially sensitive and difficult to **aggregate**. So businesses resort to **vague** global estimates instead.

- ▼ aggregate
合并, 合计
- ▼ vague
模糊的

Unlike emissions, however, water can be observed, and third-party data providers can have a crack at estimating a company's water use. Established names like Bloomberg and s&p Global are plugging the gap, as are startups. The result, says Toby Messier, co-founder of Aquantix, is that investors can approach management armed with data rather than questions. "We are **getting rid of** the black box that companies hide in," he says.

- ▼ get rid of
摆脱、甩掉、除去

Investors can turn to a range of new methods. Some want a simple score to plug into a model. Ceres, a non-

- ▼ a supply chain
供应链

profit firm, scores businesses on everything from direct water management to risks in **the supply chain**. Those seeking more detail can use visual tools, such as Bloomberg's "maps" function, which plots a company's facilities over a heat map based on water stress. (California is the same color as swathes of sub-Saharan Africa; far-eastern Russia looks a lot like western Europe.) Firms like Aquantix go further, and try to predict the financial cost of water risk.

The accuracy of such forecasts is not yet proven. For Andrew Mason of Aberdeen Standard investments, though, they are still useful. They show companies that investors care about water risk and encourage them to share data. "This is where carbon was ten or 15 years ago," he says.

s&p Global Trucost, a data provider, **reckons** that if Fortune 500 companies paid the true cost of water, based on estimates of scarcity, rather than current prices, their profit margins would shrink by a tenth.

一般情况下我们说if引导的条件状语从句时态遵循“主将从现”原则，主句用将来时，从句用一般现在时。但是在这句话中，从句使用了过去式paid，是虚拟语气的用法，表明这件事情发生的可能性很小