



WE CAN EASILY IMAGINE RUNNING out of resources like water, wood, and oil, but it's harder to fathom draining our stocks of chemical building blocks like calcium, iron, and bismuth. Modern life relies on certain squares of the periodic table to do things like strengthen steel and add nutrients to fertilizer, so such losses would cause real problems. We're unlikely to deplete the universe—or even our own little planet—of any particular element in

its entirety, but we don't have to *literally* go dry for serious supply issues to arise. Some materials, such as bromine, come only from places on Earth that might not always be accessible. Others, like sulfur, emerge mostly as byproducts from oil drilling and other processes that soon might cease. The wheel above shows some of the ways that select elements power and enrich our lives, how we get hold of them, and how ready we should be to live without.