

WATER FOOTPRINT

HOW BUSINESSES CAN REDUCE THEIR WATER FOOTPRINT TODAY

Have you ever heard the term 'water footprint' on your travels? You're sure to hear it mentioned more and more as time goes on and the effects of climate change are felt around the world – and it's vital that you pay attention, since it is becoming increasingly important to find ways to reduce our water consumption¹ and address the ways in which we use our water supplies.



Why? Because climate change and global warming is putting increasing pressure on global water supplies, with many regions around the world already dealing with the effects of water stress and scarcity, as well as flooding. Some of these are even in the UK – such as the city of Bristol, which faces serious risks from tidal surges.

Supplier Bristol Water also recently forecast that demand would outstrip supply² in the city by 2025, so as you can see, it's important that everyone – businesses and consumers alike – understands just how important it is to reduce their water usage now.



WHAT IS A WATER FOOTPRINT, ANYWAY?

Absolutely everything we come into contact with takes water to make,

from everything we wear and use to what we eat, buy and sell – and sometimes, it takes a surprising amount of water for something seemingly insignificant.

For example, did you know that a standard cup of coffee, the kind you make yourself first thing in the morning to get you primed and ready for work, uses approximately 140 litres of water to make? Research from the Institute for Water Education³ suggests that

more than **1,100 drops of water** are needed to produce **one drop of coffee** for a 125ml cup



A water footprint measures the amount of water that is needed for the production of everything we use, but it can also tell us how much a particular country is being consumed from an aquifer or river basin.

There are three components to a footprint – green, blue and grey, all of which come together to provide us with a comprehensive overview of water usage by delineating the volume of fresh water necessary for pollutant assimilation, and the source of the water consumed (either as surface water or rainfall).



GREEN WATER FOOTPRINT

This is water from rain stored where the roots can be found in soil, transpired, evaporated or

incorporated by plantlife.

It's most relevant in sectors like agriculture and forestry, as well as horticulture.

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BLUE WATER FOOTPRINT

This is water sourced from either groundwater or surface resources, either taken from one waterway and diverted somewhere else, evaporated or incorporated into a product.



GREY WATER FOOTPRINT

This is the amount of fresh water needed to assimilate pollutants so as to ensure that quality standards are met where water is concerned.

The water footprint also takes into account direct and indirect water usage, including both consumption and pollution from the supply chain to the end user, covering the entire production cycle.

WHY THE FOOTPRINT IS IMPORTANT FROM A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

A business's water footprint is measured by the total water that's used in the manufacturing of the goods and services in question, the water used throughout the supply chain and the water needed during use of the product as well.

It's important to gain an understanding of your own company's unique footprint so you can see how it relates to what you do as a business and see where it's most important. It will be impossible for you to know whether you're using water sustainably unless you know how much you're using – and lack of knowledge in this regard also means that you won't know if your company could be facing risks where water issues are concerned.

You also need to think about the water footprint of the river basins and regions where your supply chains are, since production can be disrupted or even brought to a screeching halt because of water scarcity and stress, as well as pollution.

You need to think about your water consumption as a whole so you can understand the potential risks that your business may face in the future.

1. www.h2obuildingservices.co.uk/our-services/water-consumption-analysis/

2. www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/bristol-running-out-water-vulnerable-2875024

3. <https://waterfootprint.org/media/downloads/Report14.pdf>

4. www.h2obuildingservices.co.uk/our-services/saving-water/

5. www.h2obuildingservices.co.uk/our-services/water-leak-detection/

6. www.h2obuildingservices.co.uk/our-services/water-audits/

7. www.h2obuildingservices.co.uk/our-services/amr/




HOW TO REDUCE YOUR OWN WATER FOOTPRINT

There are all sorts of ways businesses can reduce their water usage⁴ and improve their footprint, many of which can be enacted immediately. Here are just a few steps you could take – which will have the added benefit of reducing your water bills at the same time.

IMPROVE YOUR CURRENT CONSUMPTION

Prioritise water leak detection and repair⁵ so you know you're not wasting any water, fit low-flow restrictions on the taps on site, invest in greener alternatives to old toilets, dishwashers and so on, focus on landscaping on site that features less water-intensive planting... there is a lot you could do.



DO A WATER AUDIT

You can have an audit done of your water bills to see what your current usage is like so areas of improvement can be identified⁶, which will help you use water more strategically across your business. You'll reduce your water footprint and increase your cost savings as a result.

LOOK INTO WATER METERING

You can use automatic meter reading technology or a smart reader to monitor your water consumption⁷,

making it a lot easier to identify water issues as and when they happen. A meter can be installed on site so you can monitor and resolve issues proactively, identifying and implementing improvements to your water system and reduce your footprint. If you'd like to find out more about how you can reduce your water usage and consumption to help protect this precious resource for future generations, get in touch with H2o Building Services today.



Call our expert consultancy team today on

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