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## Water Footprint

Freshwater is becoming scarcer and its uneven distribution will increase. Therefore, the value of water as a precious resource is becoming increasingly apparent with a growing population and demand worldwide. In this context, the members of the Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment (ACE) are committed to the preservation of this resource which is crucial in the manufacturing of the raw materials used in beverage cartons. In collaboration with WWF, CEPI<sup>1</sup> and WFN<sup>2</sup>, ACE launched a case study in 2009 on the water footprint of liquid packaging board at Stora Enso's paperboard mill to assess its water use and impacts, and gain insights into the methodology and its limitations.

The water footprint is an indicator of freshwater use that looks not only at direct water use of a consumer or producer, but also at the indirect water use<sup>3</sup>. It is a thorough assessment of the impacts of the water use on local conditions based on an evaluation of the water availability and scarcity in the area, the volumes used and consumed, and the effluent's water quality. The UNEP<sup>4</sup> Water Scarcity Index and the WBCSD<sup>5</sup> Water Tool are among the useful instruments to evaluate industry's water use in relation to the local conditions.

ACE members are involved in the development of a science-based methodology on water footprinting. They support the development of internationally recognized ISO standards on water footprint to ensure harmonized rules worldwide and across industry sectors. A lack of agreed rules would lead to conflicting and confusing approaches and messages, and could damage users' credibility.

It is also important that water footprint is understood in the broader context of the environmental footprint. Water footprint provides valuable information but it is only one impact area studied alongside other environmental indicators in a life-cycle approach (LCA). ACE encourages further cooperation between the LCA community and water footprint experts in order to develop the methodology.

For more information visit our website at [www.beveragecarton.eu](http://www.beveragecarton.eu).

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<sup>1</sup> Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI)

<sup>2</sup> Water Footprint Network (WFN)

<sup>3</sup> Water use and water consumption are distinctive terms. Water use refers to the total water taken from a surface or groundwater source, [either directly or through utilities] even if much of it is returned to a natural water body after use (e.g. water used for cooling in industrial processes that is returned to a river). Water consumption is the water abstracted and no longer available for use because it has evaporated, or transpired, been incorporated into products and crops, consumed by man or livestock, ejected directly to the sea or into evaporation areas or otherwise removed from freshwater resources.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

<sup>5</sup> World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)