

What is your Water Footprint?

“People use lots of water for drinking, cooking, and washing, but even more for producing things such as food, paper, cotton clothes, etc. The water footprint is an indicator of water use that looks at both direct and indirect water use of a consumer or producer,” says the Water Footprint Network, a non-profit dedicated to the public awareness of water use.

Similar to carbon footprints, water footprints are being used by scientists and policy makers to assess our impact on the planet.

A water footprint measures the total amount of freshwater it takes to manufacture and transport a product or for a city, county or a business to operate. Calculating water footprints helps governments as well as businesses improve their water efficiency.

Some products are especially water intensive. For example, two pounds of beef requires 4,227 gallons of water to produce and it takes 776 gallons of water to make a cotton shirt.

Environmental groups are pressing for water footprint information to be included on labels, but manufacturers remain skeptical. Due to the complexity of calculating and comparing water footprints, most scientists currently consider these figures guidelines for reducing water use.

To calculate your water footprint, go to the Water Footprint Network's website at www.waterfootprint.org

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