

Food Production and Water



Agriculture is by far the largest global use of water. Most Canadians may drink only one or two litres of water each day, but they consume about 3,000 litres if the water that goes into their food is taken into account. Read on to find out how much water it takes to produce the foods we consume every day. Then see if you can reduce your water consumption by changing your eating habits.

- While the majority of agriculture is rain fed, irrigated agriculture provides 40% of the world's food and consumes 75% of world's freshwater resources.
- A great deal of water goes into producing the foods and beverages we consume. On average, it takes approximately:
 - 16,000 - 100,000 litres of water to produce 1 kg of beef
 - 3,000 - 4,500 litres of water to produce 1 kg of rice
 - 1,350 - 1,500 litres of water to produce 1 kg of wheat
 - 990 - 1,000 litres of water to produce 1 litre of milk
 - 500 litres of water to produce 1 kg of potatoes
 - 140 litres of water to produce 1 cup of coffee
(most used during the growing, processing and transportation)
 - 25 litres of water to produce 1 litre of beer
 - 1 litre of water to produce 1 kg of vegetables
- Organic farmers generally use less water in the production of both produce and livestock. For instance, organic farming produces the same corn and soybean yields as conventional farming, yet uses 30% less energy and less water.
- Eating vegetarian foods is a further step in reducing water consumption. It takes up to 100,000 litres of water to produce just 1 kg of beef! To put this figure in perspective, the water used to produce 5 kg of steak is equivalent to the average consumption of water for an entire Canadian household for an entire year.
- The irrigation of feed crops for cattle alone accounts for nearly 8% of global human water use.
- Producing animal protein generally requires 100 times more water than a producing vegetable protein.