**Issue sheet: Water**

**How can we ensure sustainable water use?**

### ISSUE INSIGHTS

**3%**

Only 3 percent of water on the planet is fresh water, and only about 1 per cent is readily available for human use.¹

WWF

**1.2 billion**

Around 1.2 billion people, or almost one-fifth of the world’s population, live in areas of water scarcity.²

The United Nations

**17%**

Just 17 percent of UK rivers meet the EU Water Framework Directive’s definition of reaching ‘good ecological status’.³

UK Environment Agency

### OUR COMMITMENT

We will minimize water impacts in our value chain, establish a water sustainable operation and set the standard for water efficiency.

**Water is the main ingredient in all of our products. It is also vital to our manufacturing processes and is needed to produce the agricultural ingredients that are essential to our business.**

Even if temporary, they may result in increased production costs or capacity constraints and affect the growth of agricultural ingredients we use in our products.

Even in North West Europe there are many areas, including South East England, southern France and the Flanders region of Belgium, which experience a high level of water stress and challenges related to water quality.

In particular, some of the rivers and streams in areas where sugar beet (one of our key agricultural ingredients) is grown in Europe are facing a significant level of stress. At a local level, water stress is often compounded by over-abstraction, which can increase the concentration of pollutants, lower river levels and damage river habitats and wildlife.

This is why we adopt a holistic approach to water stewardship – working to protect the future sustainability of the water sources we rely upon, striving to be an efficient user of water, recycling and re-using our water where possible, and ensuring that we can replenish the water we use in areas of water stress.

"At the current rate of water consumption, two-thirds of the world’s population may face water shortages by 2025."⁴

WWF
A VIEW FROM COCA-COLA ENTERPRISES

At Coca-Cola Enterprises, water is our most important ingredient. Without water in the right quantity and of the right quality, we don’t have a product – so it’s vital we treat water with respect. That means protecting the quality of our local water sources and making sure we are as efficient as possible in our own use of water. We take any threat to the water around our manufacturing operations, or in our supply chain, very seriously. We place a significant emphasis on continually assessing the vulnerability of our local water sources and regularly develop plans to address risks and do what is necessary to protect the future sustainability of the water sources we use.

I have worked at a variety of sites at Coca-Cola Enterprises over the past 20 years – all of them in locations which normally have high quality, abundant water supplies. However, even these areas can experience the impacts of water stress. When I worked at Wakefield in water-abundant Yorkshire, we found water supplies running low during periods of summer drought. As a result, we had to switch from using the municipal water supply to using water sourced from our local river – which required additional treatment and processing.

At sites like Morpeth, where we package Abbey Well spring water, we place significant emphasis on safeguarding our water source and monitoring its quality. Across all of our sites, we aim to use as little water as possible. At our Morpeth facility we managed to reduce our water-use ratio during the five years I was there – largely by implementing water-saving projects, many of which began as innovative ideas proposed by members of our team.

Focusing on water quality and efficient water use does more than simply conserve precious water resources. It helps to make our whole operation more efficient, creates a better end product and allows us to offer great value to our consumers.

A VIEW FROM WWF

Globally, our freshwater environment is under threat. WWF’s 2014 Living Planet Index shows that populations of freshwater species have declined by 76 percent since 1970. Climate change impacts such as increased weather variability (including a greater frequency of floods and droughts), coupled with population growth and increased water consumption, also pose a major challenge. In fact, the World Economic Forum’s 2015 Global Risk Report ranked ‘water crises’ as the risk with the biggest potential impact to global growth. The food and beverage industry is particularly susceptible, as agriculture accounts for 70 percent of human water withdrawal.

For companies like Coca-Cola Enterprises, assessment of water-related risks and impacts should be the first step in any plan to tackle these challenges and enable the development and implementation of suitable action plans. However, companies also need to provide financial and political support to encourage the better management of river catchments.

Coca-Cola Enterprises cannot do this alone. We welcome the way it has engaged with WWF, local farmers and community groups in developing catchment plans and river protection and conservation work on the River Nar and River Cray in England, as well as the voice of support it has provided for improved policy and legislation on issues that can’t be overcome at the catchment level.

Coca-Cola Enterprises has started the journey towards good water stewardship. However, a long road lies ahead. The next challenge includes ensuring that water risks and impacts are mitigated on a larger scale across its geographies, and that it can use its influence to encourage policy makers to recognize the need for action to ensure the durability of positive outcomes from water protection projects such as those on the River Nar and River Cray.