



Product Description

Water that has been sealed in bottles or other containers and contains no added ingredients. Includes, but is not limited to, spring water, purified water, and mineral water. Does not include soft drinks.

Mission

The mission of The Sustainability Consortium (TSC) is to improve the sustainability of products when they are made, purchased, and used, with a focus on manufacturers and the retail buyers who decide what products to carry in stores. The information in this document is drawn from our detailed research on known and potential social and environmental impacts across product life cycles. TSC acknowledges that other issues exist, but we have included here those that are most relevant to the decision making of retail buying teams and manufacturers. The topics are listed alphabetically for ease of reading; the order does not represent prioritization or other criteria.



Consumers

Consumer Health and Safety

Water bottling facilities should implement improved quality control measures to prevent chemical, bacterial, and microplastic contamination of bottled water. Bottling facilities should also identify proper storage conditions on water bottle labels and communicate information regarding potential contaminants to consumers in a clear and accessible fashion.



Managing the Supply Chain

Water

Groundwater pumping for bottled water can contribute to freshwater depletion and impact water quality, which is problematic in water-stressed regions. Water bottling facilities can conduct water risk assessments to understand the risks associated with groundwater extraction in their region, implement water conservation plans to maintain sustainable water supplies, and invest in recharge dams to capture water and facilitate artificial recharge of groundwater aquifers.



Use of Resources

Climate and Energy

Bottling water can consume significant amounts of electricity and energy, resulting in greenhouse gas emissions. Bottling facilities can reduce these impacts by measuring and tracking energy use and implementing energy-efficient practices and technologies.

Packaging

Packaging design should be optimized to ensure that packaging performs its essential functions of containment and protection while minimizing use of materials, energy resources, and environmental impacts across the life cycle of the packaged product. Under-packaging and over-packaging can both lead to increased impacts. These impacts may be mitigated by using more energy-efficient manufacturing, creating packaging materials from renewable resources, designing packaging to be recyclable, and encouraging consumer recycling.



Workers and Communities

Community Rights

Groundwater pumping for bottled water can lead to reduced water availability for local communities and potentially induce resource disputes. Water bottling facilities should work with local government and community representatives to develop watershed conservation plans that help to ensure that all water user needs are met.

Workers

Workers may be exposed to industrial hazards that put them at risk of injury. Water bottling facilities should have a documented health and safety management plan and provide safety training and personal protective equipment to workers in their facilities.