

How much water do you think went into it? What is its water footprint?

This activity was devised by Sarah Lawson (a year 11 pupil who was on the steering group of the Woodcraft folk CChange project) for a workshop at a conference for 6th formers in January 2008, with a bit of advice from CAT Education.

Pupils learn how much water it takes to produce some of the things we consume. This includes all the water used in growing (irrigation etc) and processing. The data on the list below is taken from the Water Footprint website where you will find more examples, background explanations, a calculator to work out your own water footprint and data of the average footprint in different countries.

Choose a number of objects. Include a variety and some that will have been imported. A good selection would be a burger, an egg, cheese, a cotton shirt, milk, orange juice, paper and rice. Collect the objects themselves, photographs or drawings of them.

Explain what the water footprint is.

- Divide the class into groups of 3-6
- Present a number of objects to them
- Show them a litre of water
- Discuss with the class how water would have been used in the production of each of them
- Ask them to estimate how much water they think would have been needed to produce each of them.
- Tell them what the actual water footprint of the objects is
- Give them background information on how they are calculated.
- Discuss why this matters
- Ask where they think the things were produced
- Discuss the impact of Climate Change on water stress in some of those areas

		litres water
apple	1	70
bread	1 slice	40
beef	1 kg	15500
chicken	1 kg	3900
egg	1	200
cheese	1 kg	5000
cotton	1 shirt	2700
hamburger	1	2400
orange juice	1 200ml glass	170
paper	1 A4 sheet	10
potato crisps	200 gr bag	185
soybeans	1 kg	1800
milk	1 litre	1000
rice	1 kg	3000

Figures from www.waterfootprint.org

Discuss the implications of this.

The average water footprint in Britain is 1245 m³/capita/yr.

70% of this falls outside Britain.

We are using other people's water when we buy things that are imported.

By 2050 5 billion people are expected to suffer from water stress (Hadley Centre).