



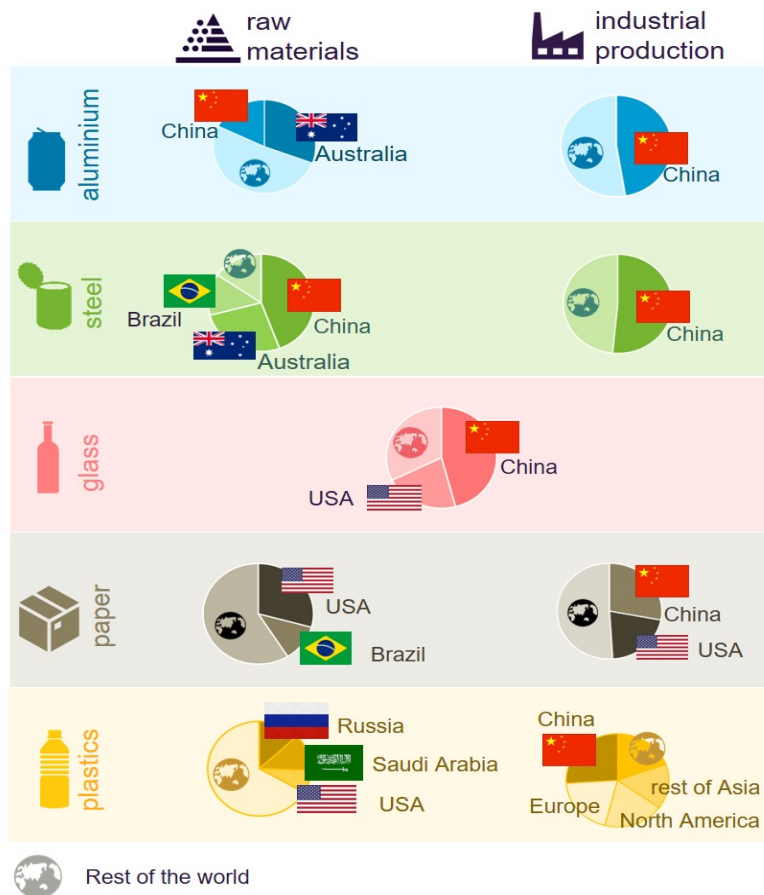
Reducing wastewater by recycling packaging

The Hague, 22nd March 2017: In line with this year’s World Water Day theme, Water Footprint Network has been looking at how we can help reduce wastewater and improve water quality by reducing and recycling our packaging.

Globally, we produce 400 million tonnes of packaging each year. Five industrial products that are commonly used to make packaging are steel, aluminium, glass, paper and plastics. To make this packaging, we put great pressure on water resources in countries involved in producing the raw materials and in manufacturing of packaging. The water usage is equivalent to between 650 and 800 billion cubic meters of water annually.

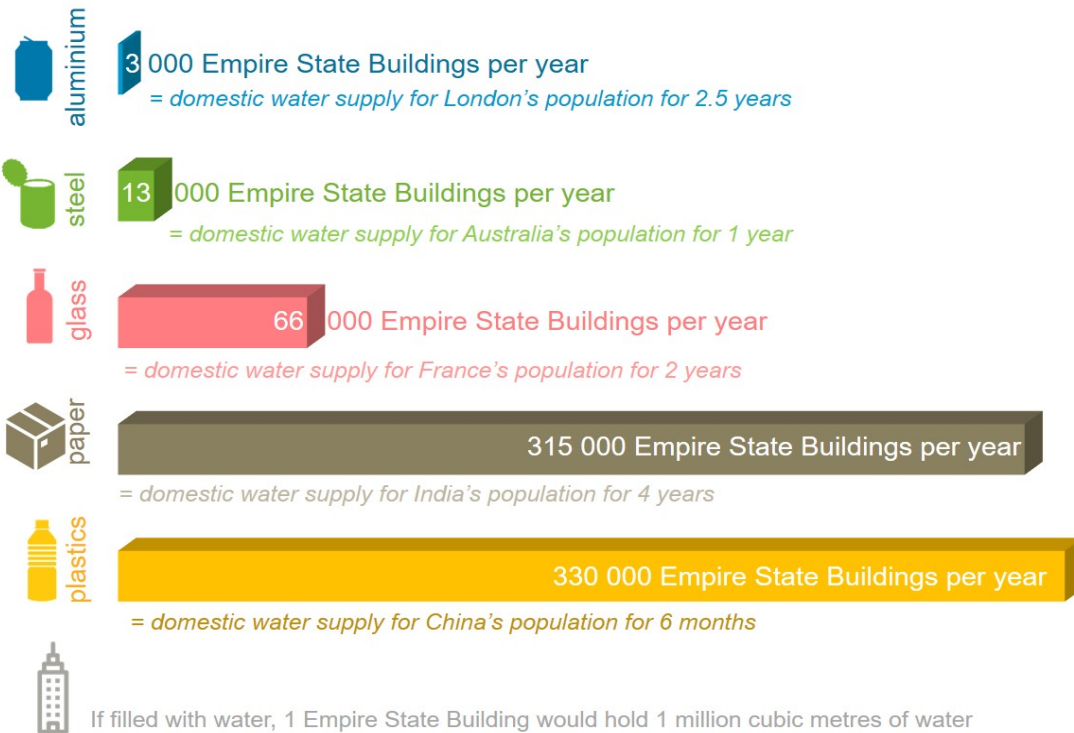
“This analysis shows how, by recycling plastic, paper, glass, aluminium and steel, we can all help improve water quality and contribute to a sustainable world in which clean fresh water is accessible to all,” said Dr. Christopher Briggs, Executive Director Water Footprint Network.

Main packaging producing regions



Water pollution is measured using the 'grey water footprint'. This is the amount of water needed to assimilate pollutants to levels that do not compromise water quality standards. The grey water footprint caused in the production of plastic packaging, for example, is up to 330 billion cubic metres per year. This amount is equivalent to 330,000 Empire State Buildings full of water and could supply all China with domestic water for six months.

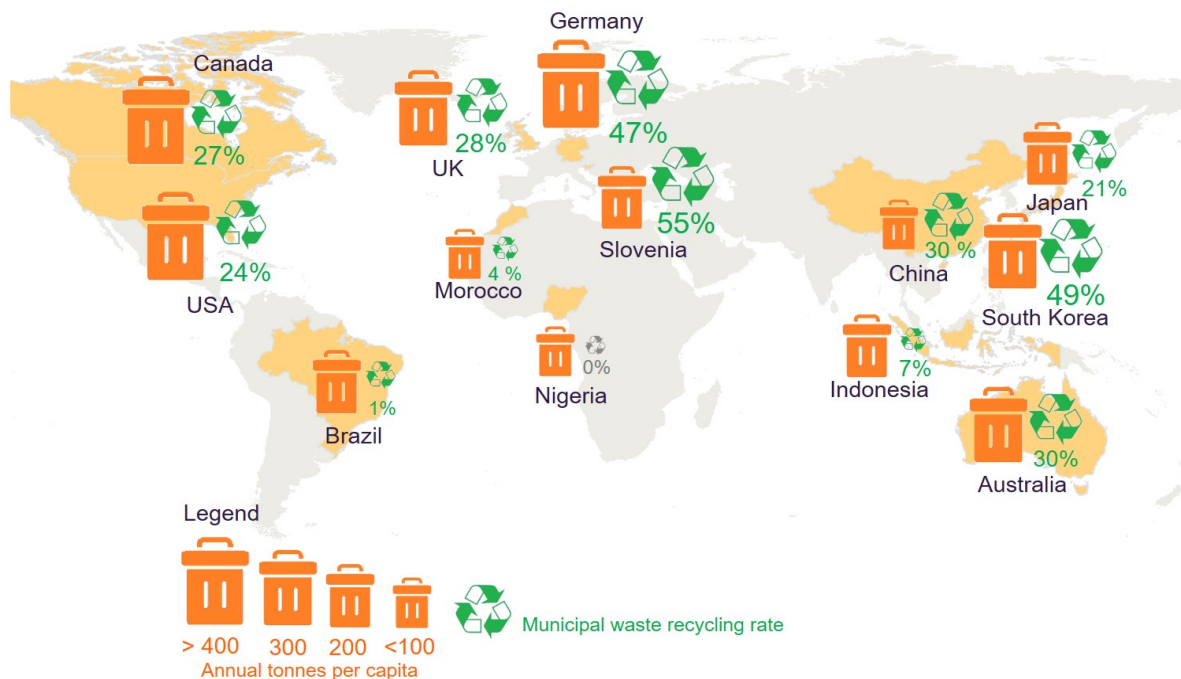
Global annual grey water footprint of packaging



Data: Water Footprint Network and referenced materials (2); Icons: Water Footprint Network & Creative Commons License; Source credit: Water Footprint Network

Global recycling rates are currently low ⁽³⁾. The country with the highest levels of recycling (for plastics, paper and board, glass, steel and aluminum) is Slovenia (55%), with South Korea (49%) and Germany (47%) following closely behind. However, many countries fall far behind, such as the USA (24%) or the United Kingdom (28%).

Annual non organic municipal waste production per capita and recycling rates



Data: Water Footprint Network and referenced materials (3); Icons: Water Footprint Network & Creative Commons License; Source credit: Water Footprint Network

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Read the full analysis on http://waterfootprint.org/media/downloads/Topical_analysis_-_World_Water_Day_2017_Final.pdf

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