Story: Bottled Water Comes From the Most Drought-Ridden Places in the Country

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IBWA Comment:

I represent the bottled water industry and wanted to point out a few facts. First, bottled water is comprehensively regulated by the FDA as a packaged food product. By federal law, the FDA regulations governing the safety and quality of bottled water must be at least as stringent as the EPA standards for tap water. And, in some very important cases like lead, coliform bacteria, and E. coli, bottled water regulations are substantially more stringent.

As you correctly point out, the amount of groundwater used for bottled water is miniscule. Bottled water production from groundwater sources accounts for less than 0.02% of the total groundwater withdrawn in the U.S. each year. All bottlers adhere to federal, state, and local regulations, which may include withdrawal limits and fees, taxes, local regulatory oversight, and applicable facility monitoring and inspection. Also, 100% of all bottled water is intended for human consumption, the highest use for water.

All packaged foods and beverage products, including bottled water, have extensive federal labeling requirements, including the type of water in the container, ingredient labeling, name and place of business of the manufacturer, packer or distributor, net weight, and, if required, nutrition labeling. In addition, almost all bottled water products also have a phone number and/or website address on the label.

You also claim that purified bottled water, typically sourced from municipal water supplies, is, “the same stuff that comes out of your faucet at home.” This is completely false and misleading. Once this water enters the bottled water plant, several processes are employed to ensure that it meets the FDA’s purified water standard. These treatments may include one or more of the following: reverse osmosis, distillation, micro-filtration, carbon filtration, ozonation, and ultraviolet (UV) light. The finished water product is then placed in a bottle under sanitary conditions and sold to the consumer.

Also, if a bottled water product's source is a public water system and the finished bottled water product does not meet the FDA Standard of Identity for purified water, the product label must disclose the public water system source.

You can learn more at www.bottledwater.org.