

Story: America's growing love affair with the most wasteful thing to drink there is

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I represent the bottled water industry. Most folks agree that one of the simplest things a person can do when seeking to lead a healthier lifestyle is to drink water – whether from the tap, filtered, or in a bottle.

And, when it comes to bottled water, let's be clear: we compete with other packaged beverages, not tap water. In fact, 73% of the growth in bottled water sales from 1998 to 2011 was from people switching from sugary drinks. Most people who drink bottled water also drink tap water.

Even with continuing growth and increased consumption, bottled water still has the smallest water and energy use footprint of any packaged beverage. On average, only 1.32 liters of water (including the liter of water consumed) are used to produce one liter of finished bottled water. When it comes to overall water use, bottled water uses only 0.01% of all water used in the U.S. And at 37%, the recycling rate for single-serve PET plastic bottled water containers has more than doubled over the past 11 years. PET plastic bottled water containers are the most frequently recycled PET beverage container in curbside recycling programs.

Bottled water is comprehensively regulated by the FDA as a packaged food. 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, bottled water regulations are substantially more stringent. See: <http://bit.ly/1Kgpcfx>

It's important to know that purified bottled water, typically sourced from municipal water systems, is not just tap water in a bottle. Once this water enters the bottled water plant, several processes are employed to ensure that it meets the FDA's purified water standard. The finished water product is then placed in a bottle under sanitary conditions and sold to the consumer.

In the end, drinking water is the smart, healthy option and bottled water is the best packaged beverage choice.