



2. WATER FOOTPRINT

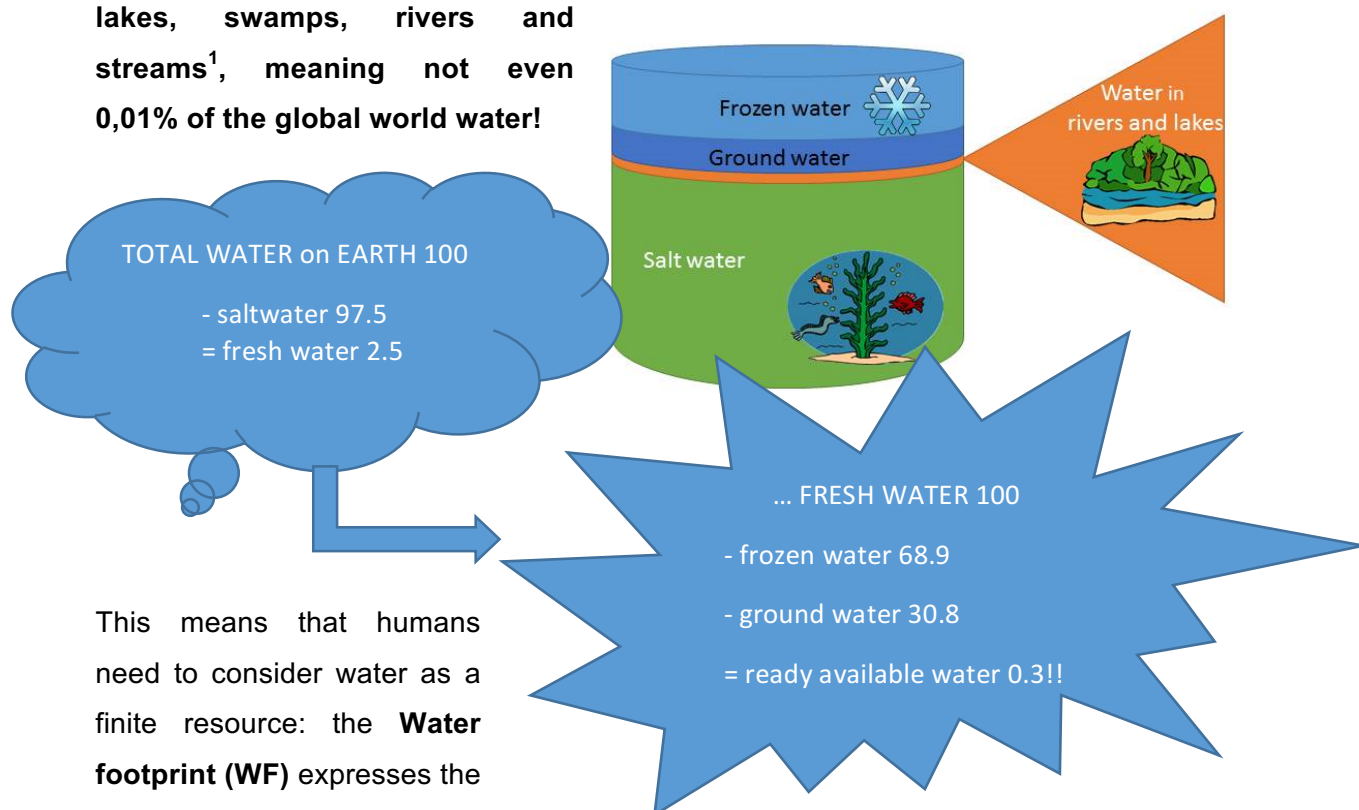
2.1. WHAT the Water Footprint IS?

Fresh water is what we call “sweet water”. It is the natural water on the Earth's surface which is not seawater and is located in ice sheets, ice caps, glaciers, icebergs, bogs, ponds, lakes, rivers and streams, and underground as groundwater in aquifers and underground streams. Fresh water generally has low concentrations of dissolved salts and other solids and it is needed to maintain life on Earth and for nearly all human activities.

But how much accessible fresh water there is? Very little! Only 2.5% of all the water on Earth is fresh water and 97.5% is saltwater.

Water accessibility: how much can we use of this fresh water? Very very little!

More than 2/3 (68.7%) of the available fresh water are not usable by humans as it is frozen as snow and ice, and more than 1/3 is stored as ground water. This means that **only 0.3% of all fresh water on the planet is readily available as surface water in lakes, swamps, rivers and streams¹, meaning not even 0,01% of the global world water!**



This means that humans need to consider water as a finite resource: the **Water footprint (WF)** expresses the **human appropriation of fresh water** and helps us understanding if **this appropriation is higher than what we**

¹ Source: (Gleick, P. H., 1996: Water resources. (In Encyclopedia of Climate and Weather)



should use. Human population keeps growing throughout time and consequently water resources will be more and more subjected to pollution and shortage stress. Therefore, fresh water is the “**blue gold**” as it becomes more and more rare and precious.

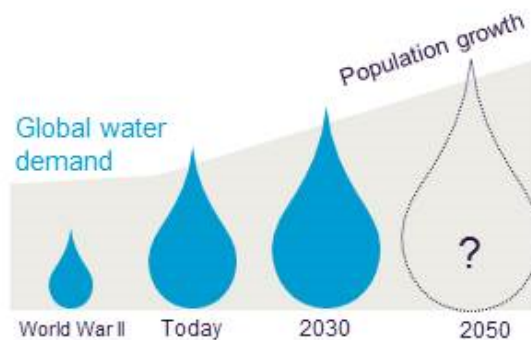


Figure 1: Global water Demand according to population growth

Water as a resource for people is not always available at the right place and time. This is because water availability depends on:

- The amount of water a country or region has
- The individual demand/consumption of water

If fresh water is becoming the “blue gold”, what about the access to fresh water? Worldwide access

to fresh water is scattered, primarily in developing countries: we need not to forget that out of every seven people in the world, 2 live with water scarcity! In developed countries (of which European countries are part) “only” 9 million of people are without access to water: a small number if compared to 654 million of people in developing countries. Major challenges happen in Africa and South west and East Asia. While water is abundant in much of Europe, large areas are affected by water scarcity and droughts — particularly in Southern Europe with their severe lack of, and high demand for, water.²

DO YOU KNOW THAT? GLOBALLY IT IS ESTIMATED THAT 663 MILLION PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD DOES NOT HAVE ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER AND 2.4 BILLION PEOPLE LIVE WITHOUT ADEQUATE SANITATION



LEARN MORE: SAVE WATER TO DEFEND LIFE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-iVI3JJRM>

A THIRSTY WORLD:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jlJOOfOpUYs&index=7&list=PLHnzEAZ3IShInekss0LWodXCLcshWDHY>



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