



## **PACIFIC INSTITUTE RELEASES FIRST COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF CALIFORNIA'S WATER FOOTPRINT**

### ***Research Shows California is a Net Importer of Water and Highlights Connection with Water Resources Beyond State Borders***

**December 11, 2012 – Oakland, Calif.:** The Pacific Institute has released the first comprehensive assessment of California's water footprint, providing an important perspective on the interconnections between everyday activities and impacts to water resources – both at home and around the world.

The new report, [\*California's Water Footprint\*](#), analyzes the state's water footprint – that is the amount of water required to produce the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the beverages we drink, and the other goods on which we rely. The water footprint of the average Californian is 1,500 gallons per day, slightly less than the average American but considerably more than the average resident in other developed countries or in the rest of the world.

California's total water footprint is an estimated 64 million acre-feet of water. That's more than double the amount of water that flows down both of the state's two largest rivers, the Sacramento and San Joaquin, in an average year. An estimated 38 million acre-feet of water is used to produce goods and services within California. Half of that water is used for goods that are then exported and consumed outside the state. The remainder – about 19 million acre-feet of water – is used to produce goods that are consumed in California. An additional 44 million acre-feet of water is required to produce the goods and services that are imported into California and consumed here, making California a net *importer* of virtual water.

Much of the water that makes up California's water footprint is in the form of goods Californians consume that are produced outside the state. About half is associated with water use in other U.S. states and 11% is associated with water use in Mexico, Canada, and China. This suggests that California's economic and social well-being is intimately connected with water resources beyond our borders and is vulnerable to water supply constraints in those regions. Additionally, Californians can exacerbate local environmental or social concerns outside of the state's borders through the consumption of goods produced in those regions.

“As pressures on water resources intensify, evaluating our impact on the world's water resources becomes increasingly important; the water footprint is one way to quantify this impact,” said Julian Fulton, lead author of the report. “Most of California's water footprint is external, meaning that Californians are more dependent on water resources from other places than in-state.”

More than 90% of California's water footprint is associated with agricultural products: meat and dairy products have especially large water footprints due to the water-intensive feed required to raise the animals. An additional 4% of the state's water footprint is associated with direct household water consumption (primarily for watering lawns and gardens), and the remaining 3% with other industrial products we consume, such as clothing and electronics.

“Evaluating the water footprint can be valuable for water managers, policymakers, and for concerned members of the public,” said Heather Cooley, co-director of the Pacific Institute Water Program. “It can highlight new leverage points for reducing water impacts and creating a more sustainable society – for example, with policies that consider the environmental implications of various trade regimes, or educational programs to help individuals and institutions make better decisions about their consumption habits. It can also help companies evaluate their vulnerability to water resource concerns throughout their supply chain. Ongoing water footprint work will provide more contextualized information for citizens, businesses, government, and other stakeholders in California's water future.”

***California's Water Footprint*** can be downloaded free of charge from the Pacific Institute website at [http://www.pacinst.org/reports/ca\\_water\\_footprint](http://www.pacinst.org/reports/ca_water_footprint).

The Pacific Institute is one of the world's leading independent nonprofit research organizations working to create a healthier planet and sustainable communities. Based in Oakland, Calif., the Institute conducts interdisciplinary research and partners with stakeholders to produce solutions that advance environmental protection, economic development, and social equity – in California, nationally, and internationally. [www.pacinst.org](http://www.pacinst.org)