SPECIALTY COFFEE & WATER CONSERVATION

What cafe retailers can do to curb water waste
As we look to the future, issues such as climate change and population growth present increasing challenges to humans’ water supply— at both global and local levels. Agriculture accounts for 70% of global freshwater withdrawals (up to 90% in some fast-growing economies), and the availability of water is expected to decrease in many regions while at the same time, global agricultural water consumption is estimated to increase approximately 19% by 2050¹. As an agricultural crop, the coffee industry is directly tied to this issue, as water for coffee processing and irrigation contribute to the pressure on freshwater supplies.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- Only 3% of the world’s water is freshwater. The remaining 97% is saltwater.

- Of the freshwater on earth, less than one percent of it is available to humans. This is because most freshwater is trapped in glaciers, ice caps and groundwater.²

- Water use has tripled worldwide in the last 50 years, and water use in the U.S. increases every year.³

- American residents use about 100 gallons of water per day per capita, while residential Europeans use about 50 gallons per day.⁴

- It takes 53 gallons of water to produce one latte in a paper cup.⁵

100 GAL PER DAY

1 GAL × 53 = 1 LATTE
According to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization, there’s a global dietary shift toward more dairy and meat consumption, which is much more water-intensive. For example, producing one kg of rice requires about 2,500 liters of water, while one kg of beef requires about 15,000 liters of water, and one glass of milk (250 ml/ 8 oz) requires 250 liters of water to produce.

And how about one cup of coffee? About 130 liters (34 gallons). This global shift has presented the greatest impact on water consumption over the past 30 years, and is predicted to continue into the middle of the twenty-first century.

So what does this mean for the cafe operator?

For starters, in every retail coffee shop, water is one of the universal ingredients, playing an essential role in brewing, serving and cleaning. Like coffee, water is also a commodity that has to be purchased. As this commodity has been very reasonably priced for many years, water is routinely wasted in large quantities in almost every foodservice operation, from the smallest cafe to the largest institution. But this is beginning to change as water and sewer rates across the country are soaring. For example, water rates are expected to rise anywhere from 5-15% every year on average across the U.S., depending on the region.

The good news is that water utilities are now establishing major campaigns to educate users on water conservation and the public is putting more pressure on businesses to operate in an environmentally friendly way. For cafe operators, there are many cost-effective strategies to curb water waste in retail cafes, without reducing the quality of the coffee, the performance of the equipment, the cleanliness of the kitchen, or the overall customer experience. To learn what these cost-effective strategies are, and how to implement them in your cafe visit:

scaa.org/greenguide.