Addressing Water Footprint

What is the issue?

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Water management and resource development must also be included in the corporate agenda, just like the carbon footprint.

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What is the need?

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- **Water footprint** - Industrial societies thrive on an extensive use of water to run their manufacturing facilities.
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- These industries discharge large quantities of water from their sites and leave a worrying water footprint.
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- **Water crisis** - A recent report has pointed out that around 75 million Indians have no access to safe drinking water supply.
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- Water supply in India for long has been dependent on two principal sources — rivers and groundwater.
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- Sadly, Indian rivers continue to shrink as a result of gross industrial pollution.
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- Also, growth in population over the decades has resulted in the depletion of groundwater resources, leading to a water crisis.
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- Indian government has announced a water index to rank states on the merit of their water management capabilities.
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- Beyond this and other such government efforts towards water conservation, India needs the contribution of the industrial entities.

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How can corporates contribute?

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- **Companies** - Companies need to first assess their water footprint or the total volume of freshwater that is used for company operations.
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- Corporates can adopt a three-pronged sustainability approach of reducing, recycling and replenishing water resources.
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- Metering, monitoring and controlling water usage at manufacturing facilities and commercial establishments can be a good start.
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- By proactively reducing the water footprint, companies can also turn water into a competitive advantage.
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- **CSR** - Investments must be channelized towards Corporate Social Responsibility endeavours.
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- Corporates can educate rural communities on traditional methods such as rainwater harvesting and groundwater restoration.
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- They can also focus on empowering farming communities with water efficient techniques like drip irrigation.
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- **Collaborations**- Partnering with private institutes and universities for research on water management and resource development will be critical.
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- Fostering relations with local water administrators and researchers could also be promoted.
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- **Assessment** - The objectives of an organisation should be aligned in consideration with wider values of people, planet and profit.
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- Accordingly, corporates need to revise the way an organisation’s success is measured.
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- It should necessarily include the sum total of all actions in economic, environmental and social areas.
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- The assessment should take into account, both positive and negative impact

by adopting strategic projects and measuring the impacts.
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- The renewed emphasis on clean water and sanitation are essential for achieving the sustainable development goals.
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- It is also crucial in resolving the looming water crisis and keeping up the government's ‘water for all’ promise.
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Source: Financial Express

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