

Diagnosing current and future water risks facing the pharmaceutical sector

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Water stewardship is key to reducing water risks. Credit: WWF-Myanmar

The pharmaceutical sector exists to improve the wellbeing and health of billions of people globally. The production and use of its products also have the potential to negatively impact human and ecosystem health—if appropriate action to manage its potential impacts on water is not taken.

The sector is generally very aware of the dependencies it has on water and the potential it has for impacting water. A [new report](#) from WWF and AstraZeneca—Diagnosing current and future water risks facing the

[pharmaceutical sector](#)—focuses on how the sector is currently addressing water across its value chains and what shared water challenges it faces in the places it operates.

The [report](#) begins with an overview of the pharmaceutical sector's impacts on water and the current water focus areas across its value chain. The report then draws on the insights from a basin water [risk](#) assessment, using WWF's Water Risk Filter, of 5,272 pharmaceutical manufacturing sites around the world involved in the manufacturing of human-related pharmaceuticals.

The basin risk assessment also considered future water-related [basin](#) risks by applying TCFD-aligned scenarios to the results. These insights help to illustrate how water quality risks represent a significant current and future water-related risk for the sector.

It also identifies 27 large basins that host more than 60% of all pharmaceutical sites assessed. These basins present an opportunity for the sector to act collectively on shared water challenges. The last part of the report draws together all the earlier insights to present a series of six recommendations for the pharmaceutical sector to consider adopting both as individual companies but also as a sector.

The purpose of this report is to analyze the sector's positioning of water within the current and future water contexts in which it operates and provide recommendations for a strategic sectoral repositioning on water to meet these future challenges.

The implementation of many of the recommendations within this report will represent logistical, operational, and potentially legal challenges for pharmaceutical companies. However, many of the future trends identified in this report are likely to impact how the sector operates in the future.

The report concludes that there is an opportunity for pharmaceutical companies to anticipate future impacts of both [water](#) quality and quantity. They could take a lead beyond regulation and work together to develop new approaches to protect these essential resources.

More information: Diagnosing current and future water risks facing the pharmaceutical sector: [wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/pharmaceutical_sector_1.pdf](https://www.panda.org/downloads/wwf-international-pharmaceutical-sector-1.pdf)

Provided by WWF

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