



GEMI®

Collecting the Drops:

A Water
Sustainability
Planner

Case Example

Abbott Laboratories: Launching an “Access to Water” Plan That Reduces Water Usage by 15 Percent

As the number of facilities located in water-stressed areas edges upward, Abbott is implementing a comprehensive water management strategy, including an ambitious goal to reduce water usage by 15 percent by 2010, normalized by sales.

Abbott understands that water is a critical finite resource that is essential to sustain human health, economic growth and the environment. Access to clean water also is critical to maintaining the company's manufacturing facilities, particularly at its pharmaceutical and nutritional products plants. In fact, water is used in greater quantities than any other material in its manufacturing operations. Clean water is also a necessary resource for many customers who use the company's products. Unfortunately, access to water may become more difficult as water demand increases due to factors such as growing populations, industrial expansion, and intensive agriculture.

According to a 2004 study commissioned by Abbott, the percentage of Abbott plants in above average water stressed countries is expected to increase from 20 percent in 1995 to 66 percent by 2025. Additionally, at many Abbott operating locations, government-issued licenses or permits place enforceable restrictions on both the amount of water plants may use and the quality of wastewater discharged. Abbott further understands the necessity for stakeholder communities to have access to clean water. It is within this global context that Abbott is committed to managing its water resources in compliance with legal requirements and in an efficient and sustainable manner as it looks to the future.

In late 2005, Abbott developed its “Access to Water” overall water management strategy establishing the following guidelines:

- To be guided by Abbott values, policies, and management systems.
- To continuously improve water usage efficiency and reduce the amount of water used at Abbott plants by 15 percent by 2010, normalized to sales.
- To strive to prevent water discharges that could have an adverse effect on human health or the environment.
- To engage with other water users and providers to promote appropriate water management principles and address challenges.
- To educate community members about the importance of protecting groundwater and other water resources that are vulnerable to overuse or contamination.

The “Access to Water” strategy is designed around three core elements:

1. **Continuous improvement.** Improving water usage efficiency and water discharge quality within Abbott's global manufacturing operations, and designing products so less water is consumed during their use.
2. **Facilitating access.** Working in partnership within the communities where Abbott has operations to improve access to clean water resources and reducing the burdens of water borne diseases.

Abbott Laboratories: Launching an “Access to Water” Plan That Reduces Water Usage by 15 Percent (Cont.)

3. **Stakeholder outreach.** Educating communities and working with others to share water management practices and successes.

In 2005, the amount of water used by Abbott facilities worldwide, as compared to 2004, decreased by 6.5 percent when normalized by sales. Abbott is well positioned to achieve its goal of reducing the amount of water used by 15 percent, normalized to sales, by the beginning of 2010. It plans to continuously improve by utilizing operating standards and water metrics as tools for targeting further water use reduction opportunities. Also, Abbott is developing additional water tools and conducting benchmarking to identify and share best water practices, both internally and externally. Raising internal awareness is an integral element towards implementing this strategy. Abbott plants located in areas vulnerable to water supply constraints will receive particular focus as this “Access to Water” strategy is further implemented.