



Setting up a Bottled Water Plant

Fact Sheet from British Bottled Water Producers (BBWP) in association with Zenith Global

This factsheet is designed to answer some immediate questions regarding set up enquiries of a water bottling business.

Types of water

There are three types of bottled water: Natural Mineral Water; Spring Water; and Bottled Drinking Water, sometimes referred to as table water. To achieve Natural Mineral Water status is a rigorous and lengthy recognition process with the local authority. A Natural Mineral Water must come from a named groundwater source and be of suitable quality as it emerges from the ground without undergoing treatments which would alter its natural character. It is permitted to filter out sand and grit and to add carbon dioxide if desired to make it sparkle. The water must also be chemically stable over time – tested over 2 years to demonstrate a lack of seasonal variation. Spring water must meet similar quality standards, and come from a named groundwater source, but may be treated within strict guidelines. Bottled Drinking Water can be sourced from groundwater or tap and may be treated to ensure it meets the prescribed quality standards. Whatever the designation, the water is then packaged either in small glass bottles, PET, cans or recyclable cooler bottles. Your market research and your water quality and source protection will guide you on the packaging and labelling route to take.

Regulations

All bottled waters are governed by the Natural Mineral Water, Spring Water and Bottled Drinking Water Regulations. These are rigorous and specify water quality standards, labelling requirements, bottling and permitted treatment, health and other marketing claims that may or may not be made. The enforcing body in the UK is the local authority. You should consult your local Environmental Health Office and Trading Standards Officer if you intend to sell a water or to apply for recognition of your source as a Natural Mineral Water.

Planning permission and licensing

Natural Mineral Water and Spring Water must be bottled at source and you would either need suitable buildings for your bottling plant or land with suitable planning permission. A borehole or spring capture structure must be constructed and you will require a water abstraction licence. We suggest employing the services of a hydrogeological consultancy with experience of advising on feasibility, water testing, source construction, recognition and licensing processes.

Costs

Costs vary, but a bottling plant needs to be of a certain size to deliver a return on investment. The entire process must be spotlessly hygienic with food grade piping, a bottling line and usually an in-house testing laboratory. In addition you will need transport and warehousing. If employing staff you will need to ensure that your employment conditions comply with the regulations. **As a rule of thumb, the cost of establishing a reasonable sized bottling plant is at least £2million** for water source infrastructure, bottling plant equipment and labelling. Transport and marketing costs will be additional.

Consider joining British Bottled Water Producers by contacting Jo Jacobius at membership@britishbottledwater.org

Please contact Paul Thomson pthomson@zenithglobal.com at Zenith Global for commercial, hydrogeological and set up advice.