



PRESS RELEASE

Modernization of irrigated agriculture should be a priority at CAP post 2020

Lisbon, 13th & 14th of February 2019



At a time when negotiations for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform and its budget are taking place, South European countries must find common ground to stand for investment in irrigation and modernization of water infrastructures, crucial to improve water and energy efficiency in irrigated farming.

Irrigants d'Europe (IE) heard several experts on this subject during the 1st Iberian Maize Congress, held in Lisbon on 13 and 14 February, where José Nuncio, president of IE, moderated a panel of speakers on the subject "Climate change: how to adapt to this reality". The congress was a joint organization of Anpromis (Associação Nacional de Produtores de Milho e Sorgo) and Agpme (Asociación General de Productores de Maíz de España).

Cristina Borrero, head of cabinet of Miguel Arias Cañete, European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy, reassured farmers that under the roadmap for decarbonization of European economy by 2050 agriculture will not be required to achieve zero emissions of greenhouse gas.

«We all agree that zero emissions are not achievable in agriculture and forests, instead we should talk about compensation between emissions and sequestration. There is flexibility in the vision presented by European Commission», Cristina Borrero reported at the congress.

The president of IE welcomes this position from the EC claiming it «demystifies the alarmism around achieving zero emissions on European agriculture by 2050» and recalled that «irrigated farming in South Europe has made great strides on saving water and energy and should be a priority of public investment and policies in order to continue increasing water efficiency in agriculture and minimize its carbon footprint».

João Pacheco, member of Think-Tank Farm Europe, believes that irrigation is essential to ensure food production in the context of climate change and exponential growth of the world population:

«there will be millions of mouths to feed in the coming decades, saying that it can be done without irrigation and appropriate technologies is a mirage». João Pacheco, former high technician at EC, advises «irrigated farming sector to establish a positive reasoning, underlining the benefits of irrigation benefits on wealth and product creation and its low impact on the environment when modern technologies are adopted».



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Juan Valero de Palma, secretary general at FENACORE- Federación Nacional de Comunidades de Regantes de España, reported modernization of irrigated agriculture is a key issue to increase water use efficiency and should be a priority at CAP post-2020. «Spain modernized more than 2 million hectares of irrigation infrastructures, about 80% of the total area (50% is drip irrigated and more than 25% uses sprinklers). We must continue to invest», he argued.

Public financing of renewable energies in water pumping, both in public irrigation perimeters and on farms, should also be a central issue at CAP post-2020. «Modern pressure piping systems are more efficient but consume energy, unlike open canals, so all irrigation projects should consider the energy consumption variable and integrate clean and renewable energies, such as photovoltaic», FENACORE argues.

CAP reform proposal could be improved

Eduardo Diniz, director general of Planning and Policy Office at Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture, reported that European Commission has given a positive sign by considering irrigation eligible for investment on CAP post-2020: «we were successful in convincing the EC on how important irrigation is for Portugal and other EU countries that need to irrigate and to invest in water reservoirs to adapt to climate change, but still we must be vigilant as negotiations of CAP proposals and budget proceed. The current CAP proposal can be improved». One of the issues he mentions are the proposed restrictions on eligibility for investment of irrigation systems that use lower status water bodies. «We can understand restrictions on the construction of new reservoirs in these cases, but on irrigation projects that are already in operation, support for their modernization or transfer should be eligible», Eduardo Diniz reported.

Francisco Avillez, scientific coordinator of Agrogés and member of the working group "Roadmap for Carbon Neutrality" in Portugal, considers water storage crucial for the future. «There is a national strategy for mitigation and adaptation to climate change which recognizes the need for better management of existing reservoirs (in particular, EDP managed dams becoming multi-use, including agricultural purposes) and at the same time the possibility to create greater capacity for water storage», he reported.

Eduardo Diniz, responsible at Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture, agrees that modern irrigation systems with territorial management capacity, such as Alqueva (in South Portugal), provide an adequate response to human and agricultural supply. «Public opinion is now more aware of the benefits of efficient irrigation systems and interoperative management of reservoirs ... Portuguese agriculture is giving a sign of the advantage of investing in irrigation with multiple uses», he argued.



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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Irrigants d'Europe – IE is an international association constituted joining force between the largest Associations managing water in agriculture for a better dialogue with the European Institutions. Since its inaugural steps, Irrigants d'Europe cover of about 75% of the irrigated areas in Europe, 7,7 out of 10,2 million hectares, which largest part is managed every day by the founders. The founders, are the national association in charge of irrigation water management of the Member States where irrigation is most diffused: ANBI - Associazione Nazionale Consorzi di Gestione e Tutela del Territorio e Acque Irrigazione (Italy); FENACORE - Federación Nacional de las Comunidades de Regantes de España (Spain); Irrigants de France (France); FENAREG - Federação Nacional de Regantes de Portugal (Portugal). Irrigants d'Europe aims supporting irrigation and rural communities, allowing an evolution of the water management in agriculture, based on the sustainable management and the promotion and competitiveness of the irrigated agriculture sector in the European context.



More Information: <https://irrigantsdeurope.eu/>

