



**EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION  
OF PUBLIC WATER OPERATORS**  
10 YEARS OF COLLABORATION  
FOR THE GENERAL INTEREST

## AQUA PUBLICA EUROPEA'S POSITION THE GREEN ARCHITECTURE OF THE FUTURE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

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**Aqua Publica Europea**, the European Association of Public Water Operators, welcomes the new “green architecture” of the European Commission’s proposal for a “**Regulation establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States**”, but considers that the proposal needs further improvements in relation to water protection. The water and agricultural sectors are intrinsically linked, and public water operators are confronted daily with the impact of agricultural activities on the quality of European waters (as highlighted by the European Environmental Agency<sup>1</sup>). To ensure protection of water from agricultural pollution, we call for the Future CAP to provide a conducive framework for farmers to maintain a high level of ambition in shifting towards a more environmental-friendly agriculture. We also wish to promote a decentralized approach for eco-schemes, in line with existing local practices.

- The Future Common Agricultural Policy should be at least as ambitious, in terms of **environmental protection**, as the current CAP and ensure that its provisions do not hinder EU the achievement of water policy objectives. In this framework, the new **conditionality principle** (art.11) should be widened to cover all essential provisions of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), therefore going beyond the statutory management requirements of Annex III.
- **Eco-schemes** (art.28) must be drawn in a way that they provide solid incentives for the farmers to commit to more sustainable practices. The European Commission’s proposal only refers to eco-schemes established by Member States but does not provide clear regulation for similar approaches implemented by other actors such as, regional and local authorities or water suppliers. Aqua Publica’s members have, since long, developed voluntary measures with farmers. In the framework of current proposal, such voluntary measures are unlikely to be recognized as eco-schemes and, therefore, may run the risk to fall under the provisions of State aids legislation. This must be absolutely avoided. **Decentralised voluntary approaches** are an effective way to compensate farmers for the ecosystem services they provide and in no way can they be

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<sup>1</sup> European Environmental Agency study, « European waters – Assessment of status and pressures », 2018



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considered as state-aid. In addition, such schemes are economically efficient for the society as a whole since compensating farmers for these services, and tackling pollution at source, is by far less expensive than adding additional industrial treatment to polluted water. Also, decentralised approaches are easier to manage, due to lower transaction costs, and are more adapted to reality, as the actors involved are better aware of the local needs.

#### **Examples of public water operators' commitments:**

- **Eau de Paris**: Since 2007, Eau de Paris is working in partnership with farmers to encourage organic farming through the establishment of technical assistance, local experimentation, financial aid to compensate risk-taking, etc. The 2007-2014 pilot phase resulted in sustainable change in farming practices, positive effects on catchments areas and an important commitment dynamic.
- **Protect'eau**: **SPGE** (Société Publique de Gestion de l'Eau) and **Aquawal** are involved in a multi-stakeholder partnership created in 2017 gathering the farming sector, scientists, local authorities and environmental groups, and aiming to support a sustainable management of nitrogen in agriculture and a sustainable use of pesticides. Protect'eau provides technical advices, best practices exchanges, awareness raising services, and catchment contracts proposing concerted action plans to raise the awareness of all users on the issue of water pollution.
- **Hamburg Wasser**: To protect groundwater used for drinking water supply from agricultural pollution, Hamburg Wasser provides training and consultancy services to farmers to promote water-friendly agricultural practices and innovative techniques. Hamburg Wasser's first assessments show that the amount of pesticides found in surface water have decreased since the beginning of the project.

For more information, please also read **Aqua Publica Europea's Publication**: "Water and Climate: European Publica Water Operators' commitment to water resources protection, 2015".

*Aqua Publica Europea (APE) is the European Association of Public Water Operators. It unites publicly owned water and sanitation services and other stakeholders working to promote public water management at both European and international level. APE is an operator-led association that looks for efficient solutions that serve the public rather than corporate interests.*