

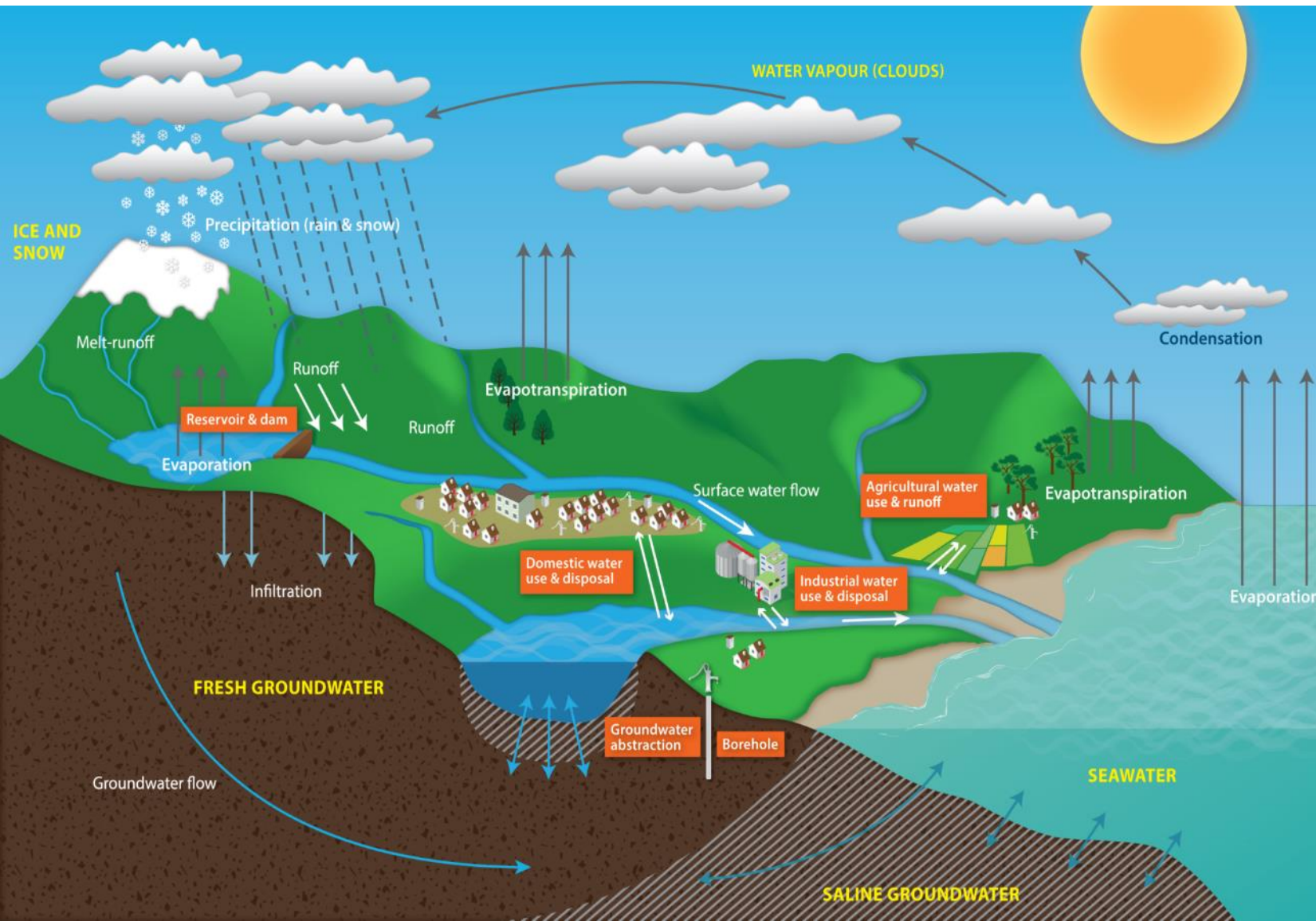


The EU Water Resilience Strategy (WRS) Package

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The Hydrological Cycle(s)

Blue and Green Water Cycle



- ✓ Blue Water: seas, rivers, lakes, aquifers
- ✓ Green Water: moisture in soils, biomass (incl. fruits & veg).
- ✓ Green/Blue Water interlinked via precipitation

Agriculture and Farming play key role in both cycles

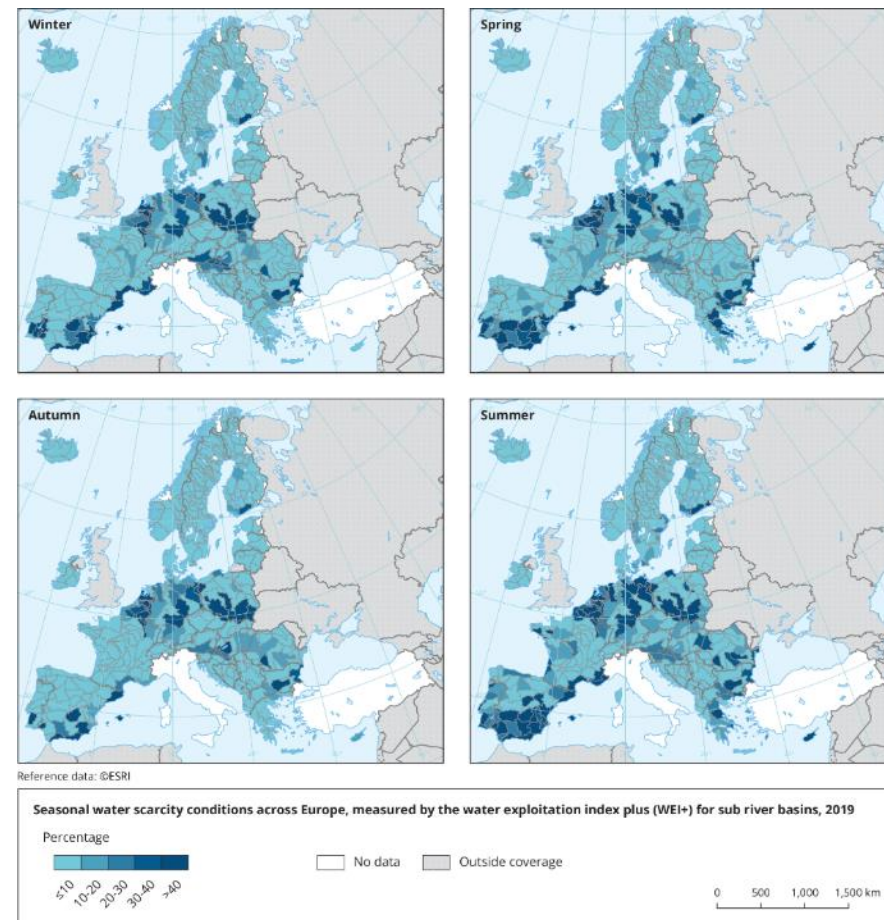
Climate change challenges

Europe (fastest-warming continent) faces increasing pressure from climate change:

- **Droughts and water scarcity** a growing problem (not only in Southern Europe, but also rest of EU)
- **Water stress** affects ca 20 % of European territory and 30 % of population on average every year.
- Issue of seasonal water (un-)availability
- future projections indicate worsening water stress due to climate change and increasing water demand

Vulnerability of agriculture:

- **Yield losses** due to more frequent and severe droughts and floods immense in recent years. (ca.€4.5 billion/year (1981-2010))
- **Medium term:** critical risk to crop production, yield losses projected to further increase due to enduring drought and long-term water scarcity



[Seasonal water scarcity conditions across Europe, measured by the water exploitation index plus \(WEI+\) for sub river basins, 2019 — European Environment Agency \(europa.eu\)](https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment)

Source: European Climate Risk Assessment 2024

(<https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment>)

State of Water 2024 (EEA)

Surface and Ground Waters



37%
of **surface waters**
are in **good or better**
ecological status



29%
of **surface waters**
are in **good**
chemical status



91%
of **groundwater area**
is in **good**
quantitative status



77%
of **groundwater area**
is in **good**
chemical status

Source: [Europe's state of water 2024: the need for improved water resilience | European Environment Agency's home page](#)

State of Water 2024 (EEA)

Impact of farming on water

Quantity

- ✓ **21%** of total EU-27 annual water abstractions (2022)
- ✓ **51%** of total EU-27 annual water consumption (2022)

(Consumption = Abstraction – Returns)

Over-abstraction causes failure to achieve good status of many water bodies:

e.g. ES (25% of groundwaters, 11% of surface waters), IT (19% GW, 9% SW), FR (11% GW, 17% SW)

Quality

Diffuse pollution from agriculture identified as a major pressure:

- ✓ 29% of surface waters
- ✓ 32% of ground waters pollution

Source: [Europe's state of water 2024: the need for improved water resilience | European Environment Agency's home page](#)

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4 June 2025

□ Communication 2025(280)final



Provides the pathway (objectives and actions) to make Europe water resilient.

□ Recommendation C(2025)/3580
final on Guiding Principles for
Water Efficiency First (WE1ST)



(Not legally binding)
Recommendation from the Commission to EU Member States to apply the principle of WE1ST, taking into account economic, social and environmental considerations, when adopting national measures affecting water management.

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3 Objectives:



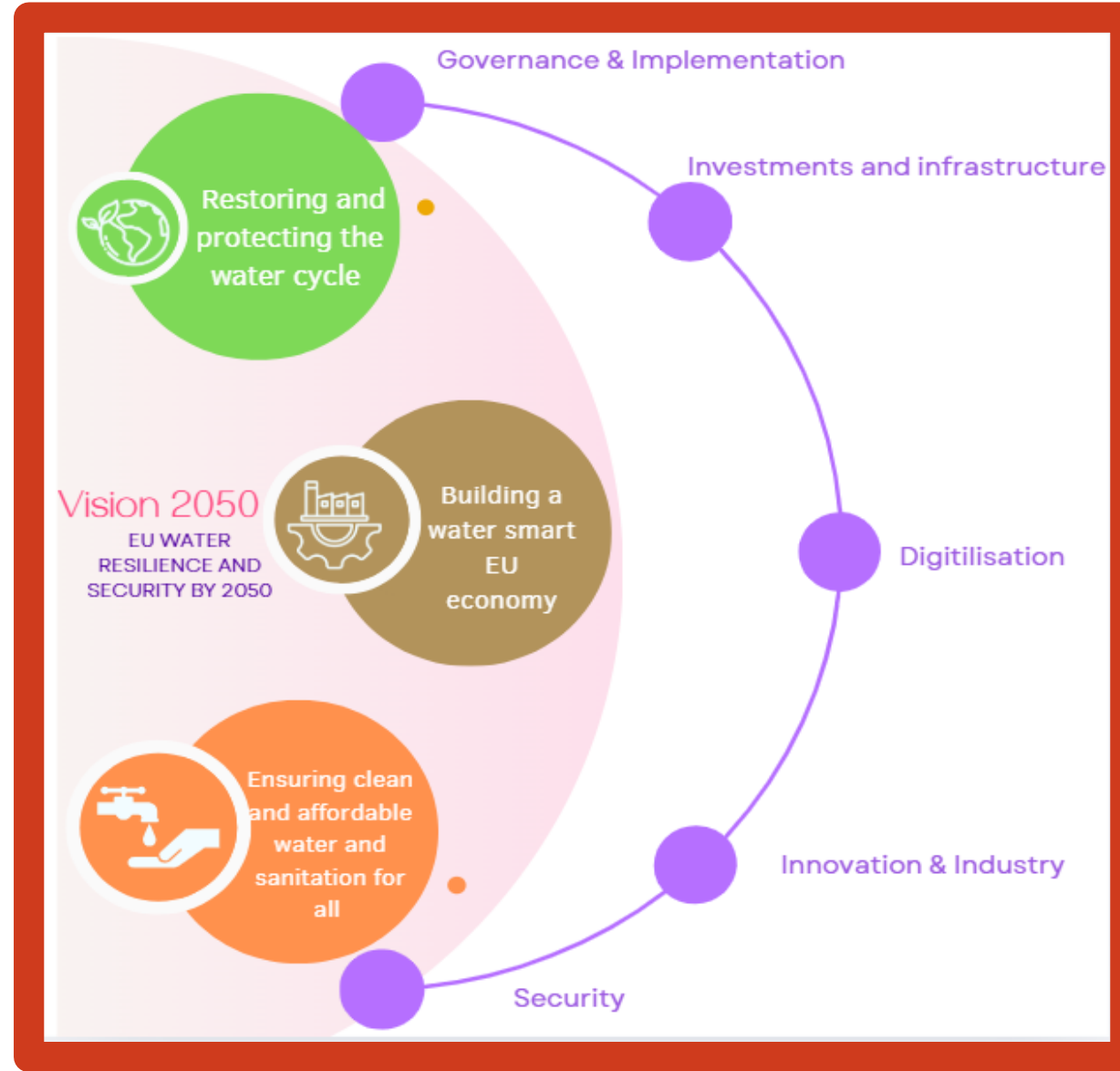
- ✓ Restoring the broken water cycle (*source-to-sea approach, restoring natural soil sponge function, addressing pollution...*)
- ✓ Building a water-smart EU economy (*digitalisation, smart metering, fighting leakages, earth observation tools...*)
- ✓ Securing clean and affordable water for all (*improving waste-water treatment, increasing consumer awareness, addressing water footprint in products' ecodesign...*)

5 Enabling (Action) Areas to pave the way towards the WRS objectives:

- ✓ Governance and Implementation (*water acquis, simplification...*)
- ✓ Investments (*EIB, private-public partnerships...*)
- ✓ Accelerating digitalization and Artificial Intelligence (*digital twins, Copernicus...*)
- ✓ Boosting Research and Innovation (*WR R&I Strategy, EU Water Academy...*)
- ✓ Security and Preparedness (*strengthen country partnerships, international dimension...*)

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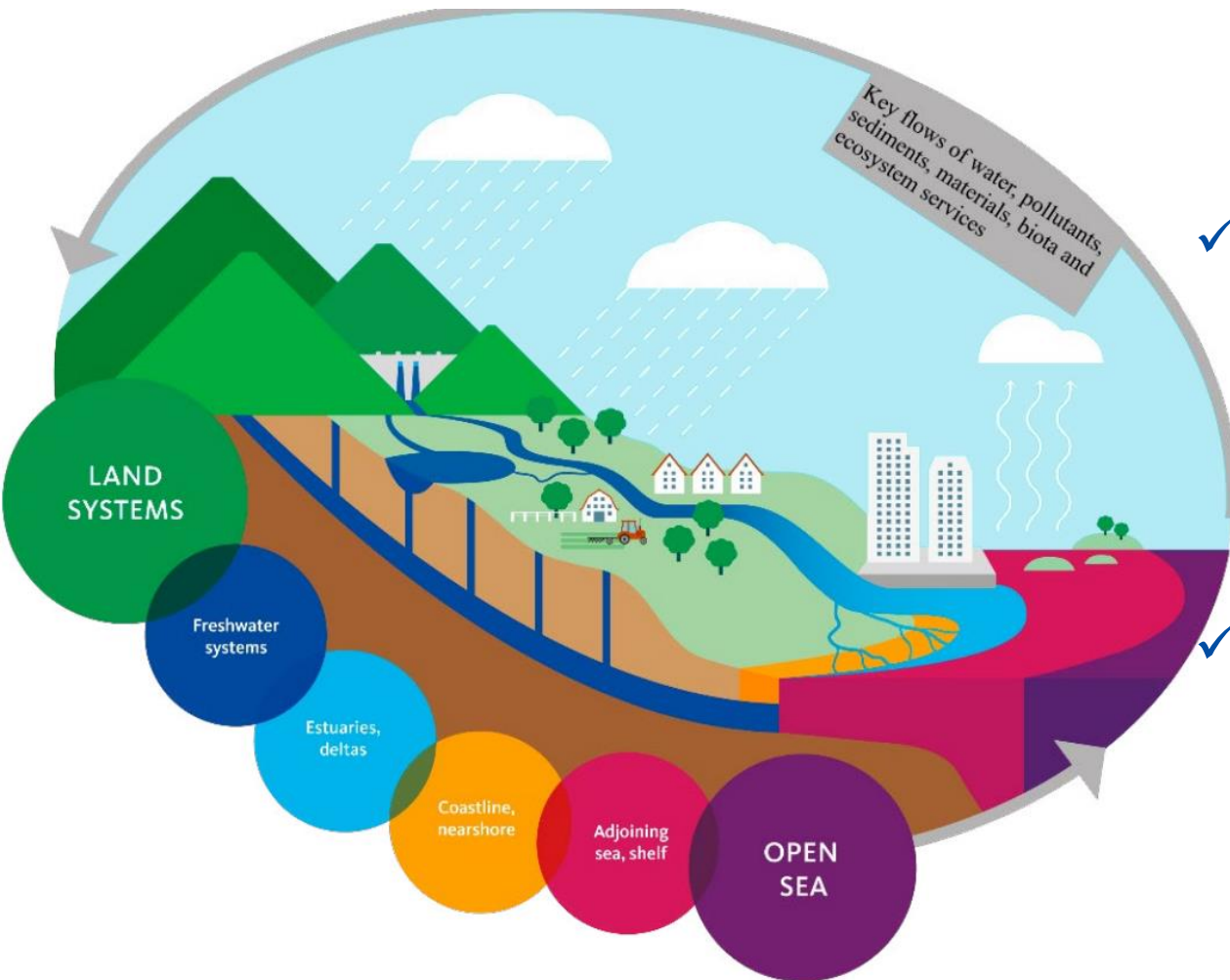
Communication 2025(280)final (schematic presentation)



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Source-to-Sea approach

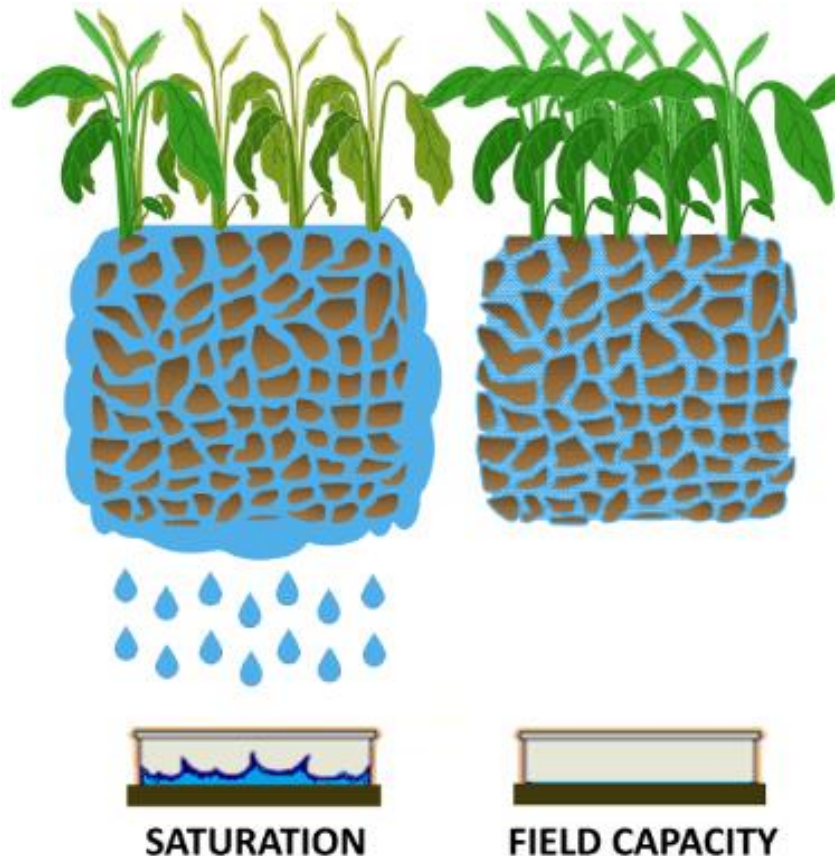


- ✓ **Holistic approach** for managing water recognizing the interconnectedness of land, freshwater, and the ocean.
- ✓ Aims to improve water management by considering the entire system, from where **water originates (the source)** to where it flows (the sea), and the impacts along the way.
- ✓ emphasizes **collaboration and coordination** between various stakeholders and sectors

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Soil Sponge Function



- ✓ ability of **healthy soil** to absorb, store, and slowly release water, acting like a sponge.
- ✓ **crucial** for regulating water cycles, mitigating floods and droughts, and supporting healthy ecosystems.
- ✓ a healthy soil sponge is characterized by its **porous and aggregated structure**, held together by **biological activity of soil organisms**.

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Water footprint

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) already requires Member States to implement **controls over water abstraction**, including a **register of water abstractions** and **prior authorisation** for abstraction.

The WRS supports **better implementation and enforcement** of the WFD requirements, **digitalization** and **water metering**



The **Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)** (in force since 18/07/2024) addresses water use and efficiency as a key product parameter. It aims to make products, including their manufacturing processes, more environmentally sustainable by setting performance requirements like maximum water usage.



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“Zooming in” on agriculture and the Common Agricultural Policy:

- importance of water quality and availability for **food security**
 - reference to **Vision for Agriculture and Food**: importance of soil health for water retention, work stream for livestock
 - important **role of CAP and CAP Strategic Plans**: support for agricultural practices and investments that enhance water efficiency, circularity and improve water retention, whilst curbing nutrient and pesticides pollution
- Flagship actions for EU agriculture:
- Maximise use of CAP Strategic Plans for water resilience through knowledge sharing and innovative solutions promoted by the **EU CAP network**, the European Innovation Partnership (**EIP-AGRI**), improved and independent **farm advisory services**
 - **Future CAP**: continue to incentivise farmers to improve environmental and climate performance, incl. towards better water management

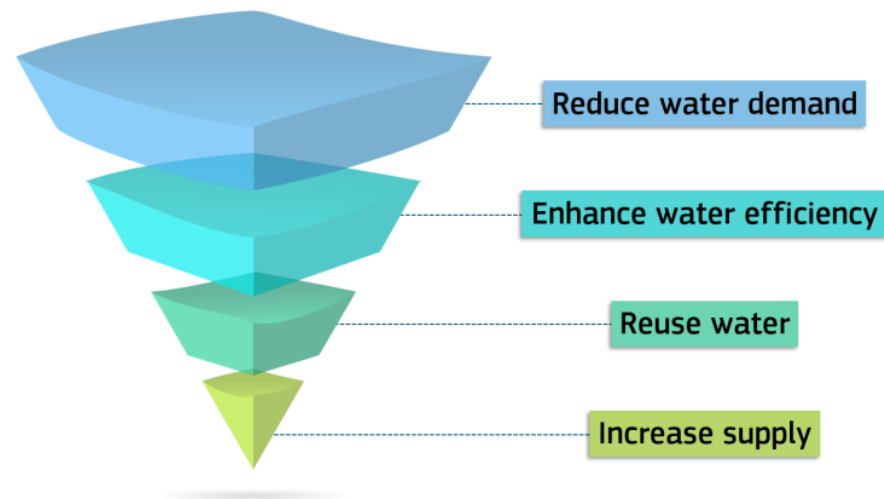
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Recommendation on Guiding Principle of WE1ST (1/2)

1. Principle of Water Efficiency First (WE1ST)

taking measures to **reduce water demand** as a priority above the exploitation of additional water resources. In declining order of priority, **consumption** should be reduced first, followed by measures to **increase efficiency**, followed by the **reuse of wastewater** and the **expansion of water supply**

- ✓ EU should aim to enhance water efficiency by at least 10% until 2030.
- ✓ **Member States encouraged to set own targets, based on national circumstances.**
- ✓ *Commission – MSs – Stakeholders: joint methodology for water efficiency targets, taking into account territorial and other differences between countries, regions and sectors.*



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Recommendation on Guiding Principle of WE1ST (2/2)

2. Efficient Water Resources Management

- ✓ *Member States apply the principle of water efficiency first, where possible, across all water using sectors, including agriculture, energy, industry, commerce, the public water supply sector, and the digital economy, at all levels of planning and permitting for water management.*

3. Governance

- ✓ *transparent, secure, inclusive, fair and predictable mechanisms for **water allocation, providing certainty on allocation priorities** between categories of uses in case of scarcity*

4. Training and Awareness Raising

5. Transboundary Cooperation

CAP Support

CAP 2023-2027 contains a range of tools to support water resilience in agriculture, incl.:

- ❑ **Conditionality:** GAECs and SMRs (incl. new SMR on controls on abstraction)
- ❑ Support for **agricultural practices** (eco-schemes and agri-environment climate commitments): e.g. organic agriculture, regenerative agriculture, agroforestry, less water intensive/ more climate resilient crops
- ❑ **Investments:** more efficient irrigation installations, precision farming, digitalisation, water reuse, rainwater harvesting, water storage (which is does not harm ground or surface water bodies and is “climate proof”)
- ❑ **Non-productive investments:** e.g. landscape features, restoration of wetlands, peatlands



Expected Contribution of CSPs with impact on water resilience - Targets of selected **Results Indicators (2027)**

(support for practices beyond conditionality)

- ❑ **R.19 – improving soil health** (with rotation, tillage practice, soil cover etc) on **47.3% of EU farmland**
- ❑ **R.22 - improving nutrient management** on **15.5% of EU farmland**
- ❑ **RI 24 - Sustainable use of pesticides** on **27.7 %of EU farmland**
- ❑ **R.29 - CAP support for organic farming** in 2027: **10% of EU farmland** (almost double compared to previous period)
- ❑ **R.14 Carbon storage** supported on **47.3% of EU farmland**

Source:

https://agridata.ec.europa.eu/extensions/DashboardCapPlan/result_indicators.html#

Jan2025



Challenges for EU Agriculture

- ❑ In **regions most affected by water scarcity** support for more systemic transformative changes towards less water intensive production systems will need to be envisaged
- ❑ Need to address **diffuse pollution** from agriculture by improving nutrient and pesticide management at farm level and increasing nutrients circularity with a focus on addressing **nutrient / pollution hotspots**
- ❑ Need for a combination of **nature based** and **technological solutions**

Thank you

