

# Implementation of Water Sustainability Initiatives in Agriculture (Moldova)

The EU Water Resilience Strategy: What Does It Mean for Ukrainian Farmers?

Discussion place

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- Water scarcity and pollution are significant environmental and agricultural productivity threats. Moldova and Ukraine, with their shared river basins and aspirations for EU integration, face similar challenges.
- The new **EU Water Resilience Strategy** is a key driver. It emphasizes restoring the water cycle and building a "water-smart economy" with a 10% efficiency target by 2030. It's a shift from just managing water to making entire systems resilient.
- Moldova has already started implementing EU standards through various projects. A key example is the establishment of **Water Users' Associations (WUAs)**, which gives farmers direct control and responsibility over their irrigation systems, moving away from a centralized Soviet-era model. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and encourages efficient water use.

# The "Sponge Function" of Landscapes

- The "sponge function" refers to a landscape's natural capacity to absorb, store, and release water. This is achieved through healthy ecosystems like forests, wetlands, and especially healthy soils. It's a nature-based solution to combat both droughts and floods.
- A "spongy" landscape can absorb excess water during heavy rainfall, preventing floods, and then release it slowly during dry periods, mitigating droughts.
- Regenerative agriculture practices, such as reduced tillage and cover cropping, improve soil structure and organic matter, which are key to enhancing a soil's water-holding capacity.
- RM starts from 2022 in modest way to implementing measures that can restore degraded ecosystems and boost biodiversity.

Water is a critical component of economic sustainability. In addition to financial metrics, a business's "water risk" is now a key consideration for investors.

The **water footprint** is a metric that measures the total volume of fresh water used to produce goods or services. It is broken down into three components:

**Blue Water:** Surface and groundwater consumed.

**Green Water:** Rainwater stored in the soil.

**Grey Water:** The amount of freshwater needed to dilute pollutants to acceptable quality levels.

While the idea of a universal "water footprint" label on products is controversial and complex, the EU is moving towards incorporating **water efficiency into ecodesign regulations**.

This means manufacturers will be incentivized to produce more water-efficient products. In the future, this could be reflected in consumer-facing labels, encouraging conscious choices and driving market demand for sustainable products.

Moldova is in the process of preparing to implement the "water footprint"

## Water Use in Economic Sustainability

The foundation of transboundary management is the

**Treaty between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin (2012).**

This treaty established the **Dniester Commission** for joint management.

Water Law and laws that implement the principles of the WFD, such as the basin-wide approach and public participation.

The Dniester Commission, with support from international partners like UNECE, has developed a **Strategic Action Programme (SAP)** and a **Strategic Framework for Adaptation to Climate Change**. These documents guide long-term, joint actions.

Intergovernmental commission on Dniester river, established in 2018.

### **Prut-Danube & Black Sea Basin District:**

In Moldova, the **Water Law no. 272 of 23.12.2011** is the key piece of legislation, directly implementing the WFD.

The basin is also subject to the **Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River**, which provides a framework for cooperation among all countries in the Danube River Basin.



## **Legislative and Policy Frameworks**

# Implementation

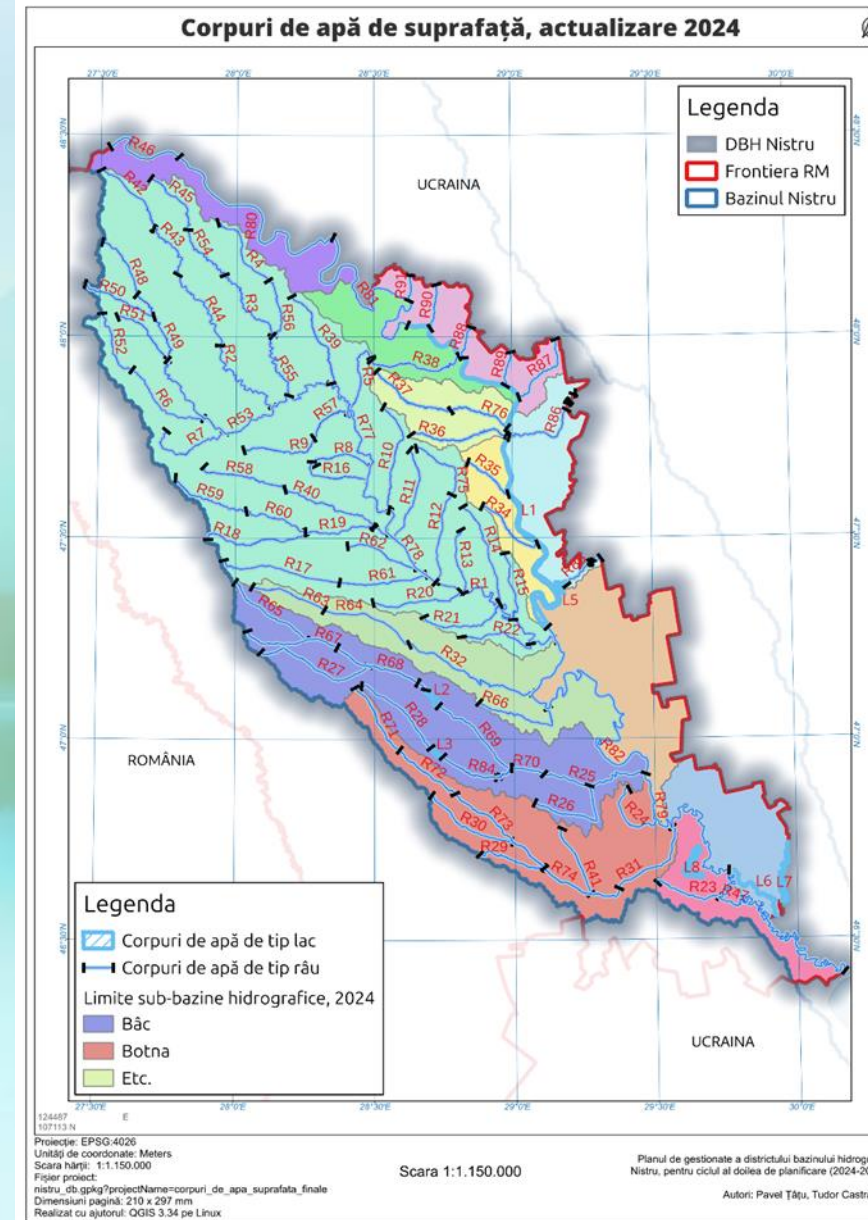
Two river basin districts have been created: the river basin district for the Dniester River and the Black Sea and Danube-Prut basins, and 39 sub-basins.

Management plans have been approved for these two river basin districts, and plans have also been developed for some sub-basins. The implementation of these plans is limited;

the function is to coordinate members limited implementation (with donor support); no operational budget and legal status. The reform of the National Water Administration of Moldova will help advance the management process at the river basin level. Moldova is part of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River;

it has signed bilateral agreements for the coordination of transboundary rivers. MDL and ROM agreement on the Prut, signed in 2010, MDL, ROM, and Ukr declaration December 2023. MDL and UKR (Cabinet of Ministers) agreement in Rome on the Dniester, signed in 2012, with a broad framework for cooperation on shared water management, ratified by Ukr in 2015.

The Moldovan-Ukrainian Bilateral Commission on the Dniester was established to negotiate the Agreement on the operation of the hydroelectric complex on the Dniester.



# Prut River Basin

- ◆ **Kyiv in October 2023:** Signing of the Declaration regarding cooperation on the management of international water issues in the Prut River Basin” signed
- ◆ **ICPDR OM-26** (December 2023) ICPDR “asked the Prut countries of MD, RO and UA together with the ICPDR Secretariat and within the frame of the RBM EG to initiate the development of Terms of Reference for a Prut River Basin Expert Group using the ToRsof the Tisza River Basin as an example”
- ◆ **ICPDR StWG-22** (June 2024) Standing Working Group “welcomes the efforts of the three Prut countries MD, RO and UA to **establish a Prut Expert Group** under the umbrella of the ICPDR and to be coordinated by the RBM EG” and “approves the draft **ToR for the Prut Expert Group** and encourages the three Prut countries MD, RO and UA to organize a **first meeting** in autumn 2024”





- A joint Strategic Plan for the Dniester River Basin covering both countries was developed and signed through a joint declaration in 2021.
- Assessments and revisions of policy/planning documents are carried out regularly;
- There is no permanent interministerial body empowered to coordinate water-related policies or institutions (e.g., National Water Council) (many actors involved, and many areas of development are water-dependent);
- Interministerial committees are set up on an ad hoc basis for specific topics;
- Donor activities are coordinated through the existing aid coordination platform (currently led by the MF) and donor sector coordination meetings coordinated by the MM;

# Solutions and recommendations: protective measures and ecological restoration

**Modernization of wastewater treatment infrastructure**—urgent implementation of projects to modernize and construct wastewater treatment plants and sewerage networks (e.g., Soroca, Chişinău).

**Control of industrial and agricultural pollution** – strict application of best available techniques (BAT) and pollution payment schemes.

**Operation of hydroelectric power plants** – negotiation and adoption of a transparent and binding agreement on the operation of HPPs, minimising hydromorphological impact and ensuring ecological flows.

**Active ecological restoration** - implementation of actions to restore wetlands and floodplains, afforestation along the Dniester, cleaning and deepening of tributaries (e.g. Botna, Bîc).

**Biodiversity conservation** – specific measures for the conservation of native fish and invertebrate species and control of invasive species..



Thanks to all!

