

## Statement on the hearing of the Commissioner-designate for DG AGRICULTURE and RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Safeguarding Europe's water resources has been a priority for the EU since it started adopting specific legal instruments in the area of water protection in the late 1970s and the EU adopted several legal instruments to tackle water pollution, and despite some improvement, significant challenges remain.

**1. The new Commissioner should recognise the interactions and mutual dependence between agriculture and water management, and should ensure that, by way of the implementation of the EU's reformed Common Agricultural Policy, there should be the advances in EU water policy objectives**

- including the necessary modifications to the current instruments (cross-compliance and rural development) or, where appropriate, new instruments capable of meeting EU water goals and tackling significant water pollution (including micropollutants) and over-abstraction challenges;
- ensuring that the European Commission should inquire the Member States to implement pollution prevention and control measures at the source of its generation, and has the methodology to measure the evolution of the pressures placed on water by agricultural practices in the Member States;
- combining regulatory and voluntary stewardship approaches to drive real change where the CAP budget secures delivery of public goods.

Numerous assessments carried out by the European Commission services as well as a recent Court of Auditors Report concluded that the EU has not been successful in integrating water policy goals into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Pollution of water resources originates from different sources and in particular from agricultural pressures. Agriculture is an important source of environmental pressure and the main source of nutrient pollution in water. Besides chemical threats to drinking water resources (nitrates, pesticides, medicinal products for veterinary use) there are microbiological risks (bacteria and viruses) stemming from untreated waste water caused by diffuse pollution from agricultural activities.

Globally, water used for agricultural irrigation amounts to about 70 % of the total water consumption. In Europe the amount greatly varies; the average is about 24 %, but in southern Europe the figure can reach up to 80 %. As the main user of water, agriculture therefore has a major role to play in the sustainable management of water quantity and quality.

**2. The Commissioner for agriculture shall commit him/herself to ensure that synergies between European Innovation Partnerships on Water and Agriculture are maximised to their full potential.**

The European Innovation Partnership on Agriculture offers significant opportunities to further provide innovative technological and governance innovations so as to offer solutions from a water-energy-food nexus perspective, but it needs to emphasise the importance of addressing water challenges and build upon synergies with the European Innovation Partnership on Water.

