

Article – New rules to promote water reuse in farming



Population growth, urbanisation and tourism have all contributed to the water shortages and droughts that are increasingly affecting many areas of Europe, especially the Mediterranean region. Water sources are under stress and the situation is expected to get worse because of climate change. According to an estimate, by 2030 [half of Europe's river basins could be affected by water scarcity](#).

In order to secure Europe's freshwater supplies for the years to come, the members of the environment committee backed on 21 January an [informal agreement](#) reached with the Council on a proposal for the reuse of waste water. The new rules will still need to be approved by the Parliament and the Council in order to become law.

The new rules aim to promote the use of treated wastewater for agricultural irrigation, which accounts for about [half of the water used in the EU every year](#). Increased water reuse in farming could help reduce water scarcity.

In order to ensure safety of the crops, the new rules introduce minimum requirements for water quality, require frequent monitoring and oblige wastewater treatment plants to draw up risk management plans. Member state authorities would issue permits for the treatment plants and check for compliance of rules.

Uniform EU level rules would level the playing field for operators of reclamation plants and farmers and prevent obstacles to the free movement of agricultural products.