

Water reuse: Commission proposes measures to make it easier and safer for agricultural irrigation

Commissioner **Vella**, responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *“This proposal will create only winners – our farmers will have access to a sustainable supply for irrigation water, our consumers will know the products they eat are safe, and our businesses will see new opportunities. The biggest winner of them all will be our environment as the proposal contributes to better management of our most precious resource – water.”*

What is the Commission proposing?

- **Minimum requirements for the reuse of treated waste water from urban waste water treatment plants**, covering microbiological elements (for example, levels of E. coli bacteria) and monitoring requirements for routine and validation monitoring. Setting minimum requirements will guarantee that reclaimed water produced in accordance with the new rules will be safe for irrigation.
- **Risk management** whereby any additional hazards must be addressed for water reuse to be safe.
- **Increased transparency**. The public will have access to information online about water reuse practice in their Member States.

Water reuse in the EU today is far below its potential despite the fact that the environmental impact and the energy required to extract and transport freshwater is much higher. Moreover, a third of the EU's land suffers from water stress all year round and water scarcity remains an important concern for many EU Member States. Increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, including severe droughts, are also likely to have negative consequences on both the quantity and quality of freshwater resources. The new rules aim to ensure that we make the best use out of treated water from urban waste water treatment plants, providing a reliable alternative water supply. By making non-potable wastewater useful, the new rules will also contribute to saving the economic and environmental costs related to establishing new water supplies.

Background

The Regulation proposed by the Commission aims to alleviating water scarcity across the EU, in the context of adapting to climate change. It will ensure that treated waste water intended for agricultural irrigation is safe, protecting citizens and the environment.

The proposal is part of the Commission's 2018 Work Programme, following up on the Circular Economy Action Plan, and completes the existing EU legal framework on water and foodstuffs.

It complements the ongoing modernisation of the European economy, the Common Agricultural Policy and climate change ambitions, and contributes to reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the EU (in particular Goal 6 on water and sanitation), as well as fitting into the transition towards a Circular Economy which is an important goal of the Commission

For More Information

[Questions and Answers](#)

[Proposal for a Regulation on minimum requirements for water reuse](#) & [Annex](#)

[Impact assessment](#) and [Executive summary of the impact assessment](#)