



Info-package 6

Authorities and Policy Makers

Fact Sheet 6.1 – New EU Regulation on reclaimed water for agricultural irrigation.



SUWANU EUROPE is a H2020 project aimed at promoting the effective exchange of knowledge, experience and skills among practitioners and relevant actors on the use of reclaimed water for agricultural irrigation. This is the first of the five Fact-sheet Series included in Info-package 6 that is addressed to authorities and policy makers to describe the scope and contents of the currently proposed EU Regulation on minimum requirements for water reuse in agricultural irrigation

1. Introduction

Water reuse for agricultural irrigation has been practiced in numerous European territories for centuries. Planned water reuse, complying with specific national regulations is a more recent practice, dating back to the early 1980's. The European Union interest in regulating the use of reclaimed water for agricultural irrigation became a priority by 2012 with the publication of the Commission's Communication on "[A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources](#)", which pointed out the need to create an instrument to regulate standards for water reuse at Union level and to remove the barriers to a widespread use of such an alternative water supply option.

In December 2019, the Council of the EU announced a "[provisional deal on water reuse for agricultural irrigation](#)" resulting from the works of the third trilogue and the Committee of Permanent Representatives. That consensus proposal was submitted for consideration by the Parliament and since then is pending for its final approval. That "provisional deal" is the reference document that has been used to elaborate this fact-sheet summary, with sentences and paragraphs taken directly from it.

2. Contents

The proposed "[Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on minimum requirements for water reuse](#)" (December 2019) includes a list of 44 Considerations covering the interest, the scope, the goals and the supporting information of the proposed Regulation, which is followed by a series of 16 Articles exes. The following sections summarize the most relevant topics covered by those Articles and Annexes.

3. Articles

Article 1 describes the subject matter and the purpose of the Regulation, namely:

1. *This Regulation lays down minimum requirements for water quality and monitoring, as well as provisions for risk management, for the safe use of reclaimed water in the context of integrated water management.*
2. *The purpose of this Regulation is to guarantee that reclaimed water is safe for agricultural irrigation, thereby ensuring a high level of protection of human and animal health and the environment.*

Article 2 presents the scope of the Regulation and specifically offers the possibility for Member States to decide whether agricultural irrigation with reclaimed water is appropriate in their territories:

1. *This Regulation shall apply whenever treated urban waste water is reused, in accordance with Article 12(1) of Directive 91/271/EC, for agricultural irrigation as specified in section 1 of Annex I.*
2. *A Member State may decide that it is not appropriate to reuse water for agricultural irrigation in one or more of its river basin districts or parts thereof, taking into account specifically indicated criteria.*



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Article 3 presents the 15 specific definitions adopted by the Regulation when referring to and describing water reuse activities for agricultural irrigation. The most relevant terms are:

1. *'reclaimed water'* means urban waste water that has been treated in compliance with the requirements set out in Directive 91/271/EEC and which results from further treatment in a reclamation facility in accordance with section 2 of Annex I of this Regulation.
2. *'reclamation facility'* means an urban waste water treatment plant or other facility that further treats urban waste water complying with the requirements set out in Directive 91/271/EEC in order to produce water that is fit for a use specified in section 1 of Annex I to this Regulation.
3. *'point of compliance'* means the point where a reclamation facility operator delivers the reclaimed water to the next actor in the chain.
4. *'water reuse system'* means the group of infrastructures and other technical elements necessary for producing, supplying and using reclaimed water. It comprises all the elements from the inlet of the wastewater treatment plant to the point(s) where reclaimed water is applied for agricultural irrigation, including distribution and storage infrastructure, where relevant.

Article 4 summarizes the requirements applicable to reclamation facility operators and to reclaimed water quality. A first section covers the operational objectives of the operators in charge of producing a suitable reclaimed water quality (up to the point of compliance) and a second section describes the obligations of the operators to monitor reclaimed water quality to ensure compliance with applicable requirements.

Article 5 introduces one of the novelties of the Regulation: the need to establish and implement a risk management plan. This article presents the purpose of the plan, the stakeholders responsible for its development, the elements included in the plan, and a series of specific requirements.

Article 9 describes Member States responsibilities concerning information and awareness raising in relation to water reuse activities. In addition, **Article 10** describes the need for Member States to inform the public on water reuse activities. Furthermore, **Article 11** establishes the reporting schedule that Member States have to follow for reporting the results of their monitoring activities.

Finally, **Article 16** defines the time for entry into force and application of the Regulation:

"This Regulation shall enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union. It shall apply from ... [three years after the date of entry into force of this Regulation]."

4. Annexes

Annex I enumerates the four agricultural uses (A, B, C and D) allowed for reclaimed water and the minimum quality requirements applicable to reclaimed water intended for agricultural irrigation. Finally, Annex I presents the requirement for "a validation process monitoring that has to be performed before a new reclamation facility is put into operation, and in all cases where equipment is upgraded, and when new equipment or processes are added".

Annex II covers in detail the key elements of risks management. A specific fact-sheet has been prepared on the objectives and the scope of the Water Reuse Risk Management Plant required by the Regulation.

Reference/further readings

[Minimum quality requirements for water reuse in agricultural irrigation and aquifer recharge, 2017.](#)

[Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on minimum requirements for water reuse, 2018.](#)

[Opinion of the European Council adopted in June 2019.](#)

[Position of the European Parliament published in February 2019.](#)

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