

## THE NEW CAP 2014-2020 AND WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

In the CAP the issue of water resources management and related support measures is considered inside the rural development policy, the so-called second pillar, while the first pillar is devoted to direct payments to farmers.

An important feature of the new CAP is the wide freedom given to Member States in its application, with reference to the first pillar, traditionally handled at EU level with rules fairly homogeneous. In the past, in cases where the CAP left margins of choice nationally, Italy rarely used them well, also as a consequence of the decision-making mechanism, entrusted to the State-Regions Conference: a home far too political, where you feel the pressure of interest groups, including local, and where decisions often end up being taken more as slalom between different vetoes than as a pursuit of a coherent project.



This time, fortunately, things went a bit 'better, as the debate has started on time, well orchestrated by the direction of Italian Minister of Agriculture (Mipaaf) and with preparatory documents that made it more transparent than in the past; major decisions were made within the deadline (summer 2014) and, although not exempt from criticism they were overall reasonable.

Italian Rural Development Planning 2014-2020 consists of 2 National Rural Development Plans (NRDP), 19 Regional Development Rural Plans (RDP) and 2 RDP of 2 autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano, for a total of 23 programs.

Withing the two NRDP, the National Programme for Rural Development, includes a specific measure related to investments for irrigation with a budget of 300 million Euros for interventions aimed primarily at improving the efficiency of existing infrastructure and the possible extension of new surfaces for irrigation conditioned to the possible savings for more efficient water use. To these Funds it should be possible to add the resources provided by the Fund for Development and Cohesion.

Agriculture has always been considered at the EU level as a key sector for the qualitative and quantitative protection of water resources, because it involves large volumes of water for irrigation and contribute to diffuse pollution of the waters. In this context, the integration of policies is for the European Commission a strategic tool for a more efficient use of financial resources and to pursue objectives related to different sectors and areas, taking advantage of synergies and coordination of actions. To strengthen such integration and promote the aims of the Water Framework Directive the management of water resources has assumed a major role in the CAP.

In addition to the measures provided in the RDP (as been mentioned), at the national level it was decided to allocate a specific measure of the NRDP for financing irrigation investments.

In particular, these operations provide:

- a) recovery efficiency of storages for water supply;
- b) completion of irrigation schemes;
- c) supply systems;
- d) adjustments of distribution networks;
- e) control systems and measuring;
- f) use of treated wastewater.

NRDP provides for the financing of investments on irrigation sub-measure 4.3, while the RDP can use the same sub-measure 4.3 and also sub-measure 4.1.

Partnership agreement has been a partial adjustment of Italy to the EU compliance rules and therefore the EU has imposed to Italy some specific tasks:

1. the specification of the national guidelines for the definition of environmental costs and resource costs and the review of the economic analysis of water use (DM 24 February 2015, n. 39), establishing criteria for the definition of the environmental cost and the cost of the resource related to the different water uses;
2. defining the guidelines under which the Regions will regulate the quantification of water volumes used by end users for irrigation (DM 31 July 2015).

In conclusion, in Italy irrigation is fundamental to ensure the agricultural production and, often, the very existence of farming. Unfortunately it has to face considerable challenges in order to invest in irrigation. In this regard, we must stress that quality productions, for which irrigation is essential, in Italy generate a total economic value of around € 12 billion.

Next to this enormous economic value, it should be noted also the environmental value that irrigation practice takes in many areas of our country, providing many ecosystem services. Irrigation contribute also to the maintenance of landscape that, in particular in Italy, plays a significant role in attracting tourists, especially those related to nature tourism and produces significant positive impact on the socio-economic development locally and nationally.

In this context it is clear that modernizing and making more efficient irrigation systems can improve the competitiveness of our food system by acting on several fronts. Therefore it is necessary to overcome the existing weaknesses to ensure that the implementation of the Water Framework Directive could result an opportunity to modernize our system of water management. To this task, it appears appropriate to enable strategic alliances with other Mediterranean countries to agree on a interpretation of the laws less stringent and more adaptable to territorial peculiarities. The review process of the Water Framework Directive that should start soon can certainly represent an important opportunity to start a debate and make proposals shared with other Mediterranean countries.