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I.1. Intersectorality, multidisciplinarity and criticality of the CAP: towards a new transparent and participatory methodology.

The "Common Agricultural Policy" (CAP), as shown by the in-depth contribution of Prof. F. De Filippis, has strongly impelled the political, economic and social actions of the European institutions since their birth, marking the interaction with the Member States, the behaviour of economic operators and of the many stakeholders, in various ways. All of them are called upon to collaborate for the development of a primary sector of the internal market, which has always been considered of a strategic importance for the overall well-being of the entire society. More than half a century after its direct introduction in the 1957 Treaty of Rome (art. 37), the CAP has proved to be a fundamental programming tool, with a strong impact and considerable success. The enduring interest that it generates, according to Prof. F. De Filippis, can be explained by its constant capacity to adapt to different political, economic and social contexts. This has so far made it possible both to update the Community objectives that have been pursued and to adapt the intervention instruments that can be used to extend the protection of the concerned interests and values. The planned interventions are not limited to the agricultural sector alone and, therefore, do not benefit only those who work directly in it, but take on a much broader and transversal significance since they also affect the territory, the environment, the climate, safety and health.

The ability of the CAP to adapt and, in the same respect, to integrate in a cross-sectoral and cross-cutting way with other EU policies, is also particularly evident with regard to interventions on irrigation resources, as they are widely used in agricultural production. It is exactly in this field, in fact, that we can grasp the multi-functionality of the activities concerning the management of water resources, also with regard to the realization of the interventions of construction, the management and the use of the hydraulic infrastructures, from which not only the agricultural producers who irrigate, but also the processors, the various retailers and the final consumers of the product benefit. Moreover, the interventions on hydraulic infrastructures bring more general benefits for the public values of the environment, health and collective safety, which go beyond the circle of direct users of water resources. For this reason, it is important that in the construction and implementation processes of the CAP, moments of common interest are made transparent. Moreover, public spaces for debate and comparison need to be opened up, with the involvement of the various stakeholders. Only through multilevel participatory processes, European, national and local, it is possible to share the most in-depth analyses and to make the most appropriate choices concerning the declination of the CAP for the next five years 2021-2027. The renewed participatory methods based on the necessary cooperation, before the implementation of the renewed contents, therefore, must relaunch the importance and strategic usefulness of the next CAP for the whole European Union.

In general terms, in order to achieve the objectives of the CAP, as stated in the Article 39 of the Treaty of Rome (to increase the agricultural productivity, to stabilize the agricultural markets, to guarantee the availability of food supplies at reasonable prices for the consumers), two main lines of intervention should be used, they are called "pillars". They correspond, respectively, to the policy of the structures, in order to

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accompany the modernization of the European agriculture, in a context of economic growth driven by the industrial development, and to the policy of the prices, conceived as an instrument of stabilization in the short term, in order to defend the European agriculture from the fluctuations of the world prices. The first pillar of financing for the agricultural structures has remained, especially in the initial phase, marginal and scarcely used. Only more recently, in fact, have significant resources been allocated to the infrastructure policy because of the emergence of the intersectoral and the multi-functionality of interventions in agriculture. The second pillar of price support, in fact, has been the prominent one, characterized as a public intervention that was initially declined according to the " coupled " model which was based on the amount produced, then it was gradually reshaped in the sense of "decoupling". This idea was linked to several criteria that can be referred to the concept of multifunctionality of the agricultural activity.

The multi-functionality, as shown by the analysis of Prof. F. De Filippis, is the qualifying element of the "European model" of agriculture, which recognizes the ability of the primary sector to produce, together with food and raw materials, a series of public goods and services, such as the quality and healthiness of products, territorial distinctiveness, soil protection, agricultural landscape, conservation of the environment and biodiversity, animal welfare, recreational and even therapeutic services. These additional and collateral goods and services to the production of food are of a public nature and they assume an undeniable value for the community which, not obtaining direct remuneration on the market, justifies a public intervention that aims to support it with the resources of taxpayers. In this respect, the CAP reforms have affirmed the multifunctionality of the European agriculture, which has been supported in its environmental, cultural, social and territorial functions.

Therefore, as Professor F. De Filippis has clearly pointed out, the CAP interventions have been progressively decoupled from the quantities produced, but they required to respect good agricultural practices and an environmental cross-compliance. There has been a recognition of a certain amount of autonomy for the Member States in applying these qualitative intervention criteria and this has made it necessary to make the CAP transparent. In this way, on the one hand, it is possible to identify the purpose, nature and consistency of the support granted, subordinating it to the virtuous conduct of the beneficiaries in the field of multifunctionality: for the safeguarding of positive externalities and for the production of public goods linked to agricultural activity, which the market alone would not be able to guarantee and for which, on the other hand, taxpayers are willing to pay. On the other hand, transparency has become a necessary measure for the full sharing of the most appropriate policy choices of the CAP, with the aim of making payments increasingly selective and turning them into a kind of compensation for public goods produced by farmers and not remunerated by the market.

Furthermore, the tendency of the CAP towards a greater degree of autonomy, flexibility and environmental performance has highlighted a number of critical issues in terms of the complexity and difficulty in managing the various types of payment, excessive differentiation and the consequent imbalances in the implementation of the CAP between the individual Member States. Lastly, it has highlighted the exposure to the risks of a market crisis, linked to the volatility of the prices, which are no longer stable. These difficulties need to be managed with the new participatory methodology which is used for the approval and implementation of the CAP. This methodology needs to be developed at all levels, European, national and regional, in an attempt to support the two main challenges: to simplify the system of support for farmers, without abandoning the selective approach, to promote the competitiveness of European agriculture and farmers on the international market, without falling back on the neo-protectionist temptations.

The new participatory methodology, which involves decision-makers and stakeholders at various levels, has to support the future of the CAP which, throughout its history, has profoundly changed in its objectives, constraints, tools and effects. This is necessary in order to deal with both the growing complexity of the ever-changing society and the extreme variety of situations that the European agriculture has to face , from an interdisciplinary and multifunctional point of view, as well as economic, social and intergenerational. The aim is to respond to the new needs of the market, the environment, the climate and, more generally, the whole society. From an interdisciplinary and multifunctional point of view, as mentioned above, the CAP has a direct impact on the management of the water resources and, therefore, on their quantitative and qualitative protection, given the large volumes of water used for irrigation and, in addition, it has a

potential polluting impact. Therefore, there is a need for a synergy of policies and a coordination of actions for a more efficient use of the resources to achieve common objectives across different sectors. In this respect, the objectives of the water policy of the EU, as set out in the Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, must be integrated with those of the CAP, which gives a major role to the management of water resources, both in terms of opportunities and constraints. Among the current six priorities of the European intervention, the analysis conducted by the Professor F. De Filippis identifies three of them which are strongly related to the water issue, for each of which the Member States are required to respect ex ante some conditions, which are indicated in the focus areas, and which are presenting many application difficulties in Italy. More specifically, the following priorities have been identified: 2 (to strengthen competitiveness and promote innovation), 4 (to improve water management) and 5 (to improve water efficiency in agriculture). The analysis of the RDPs which have been approved at a national level, in particular, makes it possible to carry out a survey of the financial resources and types of operations contemplated, with the states of implementation and progress of the public expenditure, corresponding to the main intervention measures and submeasures with an impact on water resources as provided for in the aforementioned European Regulation.

In the in-depth study of Prof. De Filippis, the main criticalities with regard to water resources are also highlighted, identifying the causes and proposing improvements in view of the forthcoming round of CAP 2021-2027. The main problem concerns the so-called *ex-ante conditionalities* established by the European Regulation no. 1305/2013, which requires that the Member States implement water pricing policies closely related to the volumes they use, so as to ensure the efficient use of water resources, and the recovery through the fee not only of the costs of water management but also of environmental and resource costs. In order to meet the conditions, regulatory measures have been adopted by the relevant Ministries, which have then been shared and implemented by the Regions. In implementing the same measures, on the one hand, it has been planned to install meters for the quantification of the irrigation volumes (in view of the transition to payment of the actual distributed volumes). On the other hand, the Regions should establish a specific budget where the funds linked to the management of the irrigation water should be used to cover any environmental and resource costs. With the coordination of the competent Ministries, in agreement with the national district authorities, action has also been taken to avoid distortions in the competitiveness of agricultural businesses linked to the cost of the irrigation water.

Specific critical aspects of the 2014-2020 rural development programming linked to the application of the aforementioned Regulation no. 1305/2013 have been highlighted with respect to this system of the *ex-ante conditionalities*. More precisely, the Article 45 (Investments) refers to investments in general and defines the types of expenditure that can benefit from the FEARS support. It provides, in case of investments that can have possible effects on the environment, a preliminary assessment of their environmental impact. The Article 46 (Investments in irrigation) makes specific reference to the irrigation investments and integrates the principles of the Water Framework Directive, with some significant provisions, as regards to the eligibility and priorities of the interventions to be implemented and according to the infrastructure needs that are to be financed.

I.2. Water management in the forthcoming CAP 2021/2027: the new delivery model.

The analysis of Prof. F. De Filippis also takes into consideration the proposals for the new CAP, which must be assessed in the overall scenario of strong uncertainty and crisis, financial as well as political, which marks the incipient season of the EU. For the period 2021-2027, in brief, there is a significant reduction in the available resources due to two main factors: the Brexit effect, with the exit (also uncertain) of a contributing State, and the imposition of new challenges, linked to research, youth, hospitality and migration phenomena.

In general terms, the agricultural and regional policies are penalised and, for the CAP, the reduction mainly affects the rural development policy. There is a lower impact for direct payments under the first pillar. The cut in agricultural expenditure is the same as the long-term *trand*, which has seen a steady reduction in the weight of the CAP on the EU budget. For Italy, the CAP *badge* cut is expected to be a 10% loss at ongoing prices compared to the current budget (2014-2020). Among the main announced changes is the revision of

the payment system, in particular, through the reduction of the *greening* obligations, which are included in an enhanced conditionality and the possibility for Member States to activate a new environmental payment. On the one hand, it is assumed that the burden of environmental obligations generated by the super-conditionality will increase sharply, which could prove more costly than the amount of the basic payment, more than the current commitments that are foreseen by the *greening.* The amount of the basic payment, on the other hand, may also vary depending on the extension of the national margins for intervention.

In addition to the increased flexibility for the Member States, there is also the central importance attributed to the spread of innovation and knowledge. However, if the areas of action for water management are increased, some of the current problems which haven't been solved, should be addressed and action should be taken. Three of the nine objectives of the CAP proposal relate to the following issues: climate change, natural resources as well as biodiversity and land. There are a number of voluntary and compulsory measures to be adapted to the specific features of the area. The achievement of the objectives will be assessed on the basis of the obtained results, in accordance with the environmental legislation.

Therefore, for the next CAP, Prof. F. De Vincentis suggests to set up an intervention strategy based on the experience made with the current programming and, in particular, based on the accumulated delays which are mainly caused by the fulfilment of the *ex-ante conditions* for the water resources, the integration between the policies of the water and agricultural resources and the right involvement of all the (numerous in Italy) institutions which are responsible for the water and the stakeholders as well. It is thus necessary to organise immediately a close coordination between the institutions and to ensure the maximum public participation in the programming process. It is also necessary to take advantage of the structuring of the new CAP and the simultaneous updating of the management plans for hydrographic districts (scheduled for 2021) in order to generate upstream integrated policies which can produce synergetic results.

In this regard, Professor F. De Vincentis points out that the "politically" most important feature of the European Commission's proposals for the next CAP 2021/2017 is the further extension of the flexibility granted to the Member States in planning and managing interventions, both for the first and second pillars. In the wake already traced for some time in the governance of the CAP, the widening of the margins of action at a national level is enhanced by the new architecture of intervention in the European agriculture, the *so-called new delivery model*. This is a so-called "strengthened and negotiated subsidiarity" approach, strongly result-oriented, which gives the Member States, and eventually the regions, a much broader planning, more coordination and more management tasks than the current ones. The new approach responds to the need to calibrate the CAP to national specificities, also through a better coordination of the various interventions. There is, however, a risk of distortions and administrative-management complications that are not of minor importance. This approach, if not properly controlled, could foster a process of "renationalisation" of the CAP and for Italy it could be a risk, where the decentralised institutional structures could be amplified by the broad powers attributed to the Regions in agriculture and rural development. In Italy, moreover, the presence of a multiplicity of statutes (ordinary and special) of regional autonomy should not be ignored, especially the vaious reforms linked to the so-called "differentiated federalism".

As a consequence, there is a trend in the development of the future CAP towards the nationalisation of interventions, which should be carried out in a virtuous manner within the Community framework. However, we must prevent the CAP from becoming a puzzle of national and regional plans, by maintaining the Community vision and a national and regional adherence to intervention in agriculture. Italy and its central and regional administrations must prepare themselves to manage a complex challenge, which can no longer be postponed, in order to thoroughly re-examine the ways in which the CAP is interpreted and managed in our country.

I.3. The necessary multilateral cooperation with the Land Reclamation Consortia, ANBI and Irrigants d'Europe for the forthcoming CAP 2021/2027.

The new approach of the so-called "*strengthened and negotiated subsidiarity*" which includes the European, national and regional political and administrative institutions, need to use the necessary multi-

level collaboration of the *stakeholders* in order to be able to plan and implement the interventions of the new CAP 2021/2017, even more than in the past . Only in this way, in fact, will the risks of both the dissolution or fragmentation of the CAP and the paralysis or dispersion of interventions be avoided. In the new situation of economic crisis, as noted, a broad sharing of choices and a close synergy of contributions are required to ensure the suitability of the planned interventions and the effectiveness of the expected results. A decisive renewal of the participatory procedures in support of the CAP is necessary so that, starting from the analysis of the current critical issues, improvement proposals and feasible solutions for the future can be made, which can then be updated to the changing scenarios. The first step should be a widespread consultation and information-gathering process, which should enable the contents of the new CAP to be widely and consciously shared. This should be carried out with the direct and constant participation, through the relevant organisations, especially those involved in agricultural activity and water management on a daily basis.

According to the principle of subsidiarity, the participatory procedures of the new CAP should, in a circular way, start at a local level and move on to regional and national procedures, before developing at a European level. The same levels should be followed up and permanently linked at the various stages of the proposal, approval, implementation and monitoring of the next CAP. At all levels, in addition to the policy makers and the competent administrative authorities, the *stakeholders* of agricultural activity and management of agricultural resources, should be directly involved and given responsibility in the construction and implementation of the CAP objectives and interventions. While the institutional link between the different levels of governance, finds a complete discipline in the European, national and regional legal sources, in terms of the distribution of competences and the administrative procedures to be respected, to which reference must be made, with regard to the private dimension of the *stakeholders*' involvement, it is necessary to share a participatory and responsible methodology in the implementation of the interventions. In many ways, the expansion of the parties involved in the participatory processes, requires appropriate tools for the contractual definition of decisions.

In this context, among the representative organizations of the agricultural world and of the management of water resources, the Italian Land Reclamation Consortiums are the most qualified interlocutors to be directly and permanently involved in the CAP. These organisations have their own representative base spread throughout the territory, offering the necessary knowledge and skills in the field. Such organisations, liaise both with economic operators from the sector and also with other organisations operating at a regional, national and European level through representative mechanisms on a democratic basis. In this sense, ANBI, as an association that brings together the Italian Land Reclamation Consortia, has its own multi-level regional and national organisational system and, at a European level, it belongs to the *Irrigants d'Europe* federation that also brings together its Portuguese, Spanish and French counterparts.

In this respect, in the design and implementation of the CAP, the political institutions use social and economic bodies that are capable of expressing negotiated solutions to which precise responsibility assumptions correspond, guaranteeing the flexibility and effectiveness of interventions. The moments of dialogue on the CAP have already started both by ANBI and by *Irrigants d'Europe* with their own economic and social basis, and also with the local, regional, national and European political decision-makers. From the analysis of the critical points, we move on to the construction of the intervention contents, to the forecasting of the control systems and the verification of the achievement of the common objectives.

I.4. Some proposals for the next CAP 2021/2027.

The contribution presented by Prof. F. De Filippi on "The common policy (CAP) and the management of the water resources" highlighted the importance and the continuous evolution of the CAP in the first fifty years of its use. The analysis highlighted the serious criticalities, mainly linked to the system of *ex-ante conditionalities*, that have so far been found in the implementation of interventions and that have limited the full effectiveness of the programming tool. The main innovations which have been proposed, both in terms of methods and content, for the forthcoming CAP 2021/2027 are also important. The application of the "reinforced and negotiated subsidiarity principle" is the most significant policy innovation, which requires a close synergy and a continuous collaboration between institutions and stakeholders in the

construction and implementation of the next CAP, at a European, national and a regional level. In this sense, as far as the first phase is concerned, it is necessary to build open participatory processes for discussion and decision making which make proposals for the next CAP, starting from the identified problems . Through the Land Reclamation Consortia, ANBI and Irrigants d'Europe, as representative organizations of the agricultural world and of the management of water resources, the aim is to collect proposals to be brought to the attention of institutions, political decision-makers and administrative managers of the CAP in order to share the solutions to be adopted and to assume responsibility for implementing the interventions of the CAP 2021-2017.

For display purposes, the points of the document of *Irrigants d'Europe* of 1 July 2018 will be reproduced both according to order and content on the "*Future CAP 2021-2027: a challenge for the irrigated agriculture, Position Paper*". These points are intended to be further developed and shared through the planned activities of information, dissemination and comparison that will take place in Italy with all relevant stakeholders, at a regional and national level. Firstly, and in general terms, the importance of the responsible use of water in irrigation is recognised as part of the European strategy for the sustainable use of natural resources and the commitment to support irrigated agriculture in order to achieve a good water status. At the same time, the commitment to support irrigated agriculture in achieving the objectives of sustainable use is renewed.

The policies and investments of the past to support the expansion of the irrigated area through the financing of infrastructure and equipment for agriculture have proved to be successful: the modern irrigated agriculture has brought economic development and food security to the European society as a whole and to the Italian society, in particular. However, in a vast and expanding part of the land of the EU and Italy, the irrigation is essential for the vitality of family agricultural enterprises. The socio-economic importance of irrigated agriculture within the EU and Italy should therefore not be underestimated.

A better management of the water/food nexus is crucial for the economic development in Europe and also for the implementation of the circular economy. Investments have been made to support a sustainable and ecological growth in the sector, which is now among the most advanced and innovative ones in the agricultural sector and beyond.

The constraints on irrigated agriculture penalize investments in innovation and slow down progress towards sustainable water/food solutions. The European Union's excellent technical skills and its proven capacity for innovation must be mobilised to support the common objectives of promoting quality and sustainable agricultural production.

In the light of the current discussion on the CAP proposal 2021-2027, the following points have been agreed and will be developed at a national and regional level in Italy:

1. Support sustainable agricultural incomes and resilience across the EU to improve food security.

The proven ability of the irrigation agricultural sector to find new solutions and generate new and sustainable agricultural systems requires a stable and profitable agricultural income for the investments and operations. Maintenance is needed to make the management of the water resources sustainable. The CAP funds have to be allocated for the modernisation and expansion of irrigated areas, in order to improve food security through the generation of a sustainable agricultural income, while maintaining sustainable irrigation and increasing resilience against drought. In addition to the investments in agriculture, the CAP should ensure parallel and coordinated investments in out-of-farm infrastructures, which are strongly needed to strengthen the water, irrigation and drainage networks.

There is a call for initiatives which will facilitate access to finance and credits in the irrigated agricultural sector for the modernisation of the irrigation equipment and water storage. This will help reduce risk exposure and increase the resilience of the irrigated agricultural sector.

2. Improve the market orientation and increase competitiveness, including a stronger focus on research, technology and digitisation.

Investments in new technologies and innovative solutions as regards to the irrigated areas and access to resources should also be stimulated by an increased flexibility , in order to reduce possible risks for farmers. The 4.0 agriculture requires significant and long-lasting investments in digitalisation. Irrigated agriculture is already moving in that direction. The CAP should not have a negative impact on profitable solutions in the field of fully market-oriented irrigation systems, as this would damage the competitiveness of agriculture in both internal and global markets.

There is a call for recognition of the progress made by the irrigated agricultural sector towards the sustainable use of water. The new CAP needs to develop research, technology and digitisation, targeting the development of more entrepreneurial and market-oriented irrigation systems. However, a single administrative cycle for the CAP is not enough to achieve the ambitious objectives set by the EU policies. A longer transition phase is needed which, going beyond the 7 years of the CAP period, will be supported by longer measures and programmes.

3. Improve the position of the farmers in the value chain

The current situation, with the shifting risks of multi-national corporations - including environmental risks - to farmers, in addition to low incomes, is seriously undermining the implementation of the environmental policies and innovation in irrigated agriculture. The current market demand obliges farmers to grow more high-quality products, ensuring consistently high productivity levels and quality standards that only irrigation and fertilisation can guarantee, despite the low efficiency of the highest rate of supply.The non-productive use of water on the farm would be reduced by rewarding positive externalities brought about by sustainable irrigation and farming practices and by paying farmers a reasonable price without charging environmental costs and risks.

The position of farmers in the food chain must be strengthened by combating unfair trade practices. In this respect, the CAP must be accompanied by a strong food policy.

4. Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as to sustainable energy

Irrigation is often seen as a practice that harms the environment, but when it comes to climate change it is considered an effective solution for mitigation, in addition to the primary means for adapting to agriculture.

Resources in the framework of the CAP policies are requested in order to continue the work done for the modernisation of the irrigation systems, the renewal and further development of the water infrastructure and the water storage facilities. These infrastructures should also provide water transfers between river basins with a positive balance towards those suffering from a negative water balance.

There is a strong opposition to the restriction of farmers' access to sustainable irrigation options. In a context of increasing climate risks the CAP must allow the irrigated sector to continue to provide a high level of food security and renewable energy production.

5. Promote the sustainable development and the efficient management of natural resources such as water, soil and air

The true mission of the irrigated agricultural sector is the efficient management of the water resources which has promoted development for centuries in a way that has proved sustainable under the environmental and socio-economic pressures of the historical period. The fast changes in the European environment (climate change) and the socio-economic structure (the declining number of farmers, globalisation) are testing the sector for its ability to respond to these new environmental, social and market factors, but it needs more time to respond appropriately compared to the too tight deadlines that are set by current policies.

The CAP will therefore need to set realistic objectives, taking into consideration that progress towards sustainable water management in agriculture is evident and that results will be even more evident in the coming years, also the CAP policies have the role of contributing to the maintenance of the agricultural governance of water, in terms of culture, knowledge and infrastructure. The future of agriculture and food in Europe will be built on water.

6. Contribute to the protection of biodiversity, improve the ecosystem services and preserve habitats and landscapes

An increasing number of protected bird species, amphibians, reptiles and insects have found shelter, nesting areas and are fed on irrigated farmland. The large area of irrigated land or canal banks is home to a large number of species and breeding farms, which supports a significant increase in the number of specimens and their spread into new territories. The abandonment of irrigation in thousands of kilometres of canals would dry up habitats, causing serious losses in biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Productivity should not only be considered in terms of agricultural benefits, but also in terms of the environmental benefits that every single cubic metre of irrigation water generates. Ecosystem services should be considered as benefits already offered by the irrigation sector and as realistic environmental objectives. This change both in perception and in the general attitude towards the irrigated agriculture is fundamental for motivating and stimulating efforts aimed at enhancing biodiversity, the ecosystem services and the habitats of landscape conservation.

7. Foster young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas

The participation of young people in the agricultural sector is still low, mainly because the sector is very unappealing and does not offer the same income as urban areas. In this respect, irrigated agriculture can provide more stable and higher incomes and can be more attractive to young farmers, who are better at using digital skills for farm planning, production and marketing. The irrigated agriculture offers new opportunities for the growth of business opportunities, thanks to its high technological level, and new technologies to be used daily and in a widespread way (irrigation management tools, sensors, remote sensing, etc..). Therefore, young farmers can take advantage of these opportunities by implementing innovations that have not been adopted until now by an ageing rural society.

The CAP must provide actions that can facilitate the development of new business models that can attract young farmers in the field of specialized agriculture and high-tech irrigation. To achieve this, it is essential to finance the digitalization of agricultural production and marketing information. The CAP should offer open, innovative and challenging solutions for sustainable and efficient agricultural business models that can manage dynamic balances between the environment and food production.

8. Stimulate employment, growth, social integration and local development in rural areas, including the bio-economy and sustainable forestry

Insufficient and irregular water supply can seriously affect the quality and quantity of employment in the agri-food sector. This limits agricultural productivity and undermines income stability, with dramatic effects mainly on small farmers. In addition, without irrigation, farmers are forced to grow crops that have shorter harvesting seasons, with negative effects on labour supply and demand. Agricultural water policies are essential for maintaining agricultural entrepreneurs in Europe and creating job opportunities through the bio-economy and the circular economy. In this context, the qualification of the workforce and improving the skills is crucial for the further development of the irrigated agricultural sector in the EU.

There is therefore a need for investments in water and policies that support and reward improvements in the efficiency of resources, storage and re-use of water. The CAP must support the irrigated agriculture, by increasing competitiveness, resilience and security, and creating new sources of jobs and growth through the sustainable use of water.

9. Improve the EU agricultural response to the demands of society on food and health, including safe, nutritious and sustainable food.

The climate change, the economic and other related crisis are already having an impact on food production and on the demand for food and animal feed, setting serious new challenges for the European food supply system. A healthy diet that involves more fresh fruit and vegetables and less fat and animal protein should be accessible to all EU citizens. Although most fruit, vegetables, oilseeds and root crops are irrigated and this type of diet as such can reduce the food water footprint compared to the current European average and the ecological footprint will decrease, as well.

The European institutions should rigorously develop, adopt and respect the CAP policies which aim to support the production of high quality, safe, nutritious and sustainable food. This is necessary to give access to a healthy diet even to those EU citizens with low incomes, improving their health and life expectancy, while reducing food-related diseases and their high social costs. The CAP policies should present irrigated agriculture in favourable terms, so as to promote the production of healthy food even in regions where a healthy diet is part of the cultural heritage.

10. Promote knowledge, innovation and digitisation in agriculture and rural areas

Digital irrigated agriculture is making its way into businesses across Europe, but it is important to facilitate the conditions in which these new practices spread around. Digital irrigated agriculture allows farmers to use valuable new technologies, which can be used on a large scale, on irrigated areas without expansion restrictions. The CAP policies need to encourage the rapid implementation of innovation in the irrigated agricultural sector. This should include the gradual transition to a digital phase of irrigated agriculture linked to cultivation systems.

Therefore, consistent CAP policies are required that can address the transition to digital irrigated agriculture, in order to improve the overall sustainability, the cost-benefit ratio and the risks taken by farmers in implementing technological innovation. The CAP needs to properly and responsibly consider the positive impacts of technology in the management of irrigation systems in the short, medium and long term.

11. Performance-based payment schemes

A key challenge for performance-based payment systems (RBPS) is to ensure their relevance to the EU objectives. However, it is often not possible to establish direct links between CAP actions and the achievement of objectives. The most difficult problem concerns the selection of the indicators and the establishment of the value of the threshold indicator for payment. Therefore, each RBPS must be designed for the specific context in which it will operate.

The active involvement of irrigated agriculture and farmers' representatives is needed as a prerequisite at all levels of the decision-making process. This process provides RBPS management schemes, from a local to a European level. A real operational freedom should be given to the Committee on Agricultural Water and to farmers for the implementation of the water governance and irrigation solutions that are most effective for achieving the multiple CAP, including environmental actions. For this reason, the farm-level objectives and the performance indicators for the water/food link objectives must be: 1) representative; 2) consistently present in the agricultural area of destination; 3) easily identifiable and measurable; 4) sensitive to changes in the agricultural management within the timeframe of the CAP, but stable over time; 5) farmers must have confidence in the performance indicators and in the reliability of the protocols used to measure them; and 6) exclude that they may be influenced by external factors outside the control of the land manager.

12. A co-operative approach

Local leaders and facilitators play a key role the in the achievement of a successfully collaborative and co-operative approach. Another element contributing to the success of these approaches is the presence of appropriate governance structures and experienced administrations. In some Member States (Italy, Spain, France and Portugal) the management of water resources is organised by the formation of collective organisations in which farmers are involved and have been involved for centuries. These organisations have been given the task of water management for irrigation and land reclamation networks from agricultural land and cities, soil management and land conservation. Regarding the hydrological aspects, therefore, the same organisations are in the best position to lead such approaches in the CAP 2021-2027.

The role of a " trustworthy organisation " or " local facilitator " should be recognised by the Land Reclamation Consortia in Italy, their counterparts in Spain and Portugal, and other collective water management organisations throughout Europe. Funding must be guaranteed before launching initiatives for cooperation in order to avoid the risk of failure if funding applications prove unsuccessful. In addition, funding must be available for the duration of the whole project, the implementation of which may, in some

cases, go beyond the length of contracts that have been agreed under a DDR measure or the rural development programming period of seven years.

13. Strategic management planning

Strategic Management Planning (SMP), the overall global strategic planning at a Member State (MS) level, is seen as the crucial element of the CAP proposal 2021-2027. The strategic management planning involves the definition of a policy on the intervention needs which are identified and recognised by society, the identification of objectives and indicators, the selection of the best available measures which can effectively contribute to the achievement of the objectives set. The MS-SMP measures should therefore be modified according to the obtained results or other unknown objective causes. However, the analysis of the current agricultural policy shows that in the majority of the Member States there is a picture of the economic situation and of the influence of agricultural policy on irrigated agriculture that is not very clear. Therefore, it is difficult to identify the priorities of the agricultural policy on irrigated agriculture by the Member States unless there is a clear picture of the crucial issue that needs to be faced. Given the bureaucracy in individual countries, the image of the economic situation that is not very clear and the influence of agricultural policy on irrigated agriculture, it is likely that a large proportion of the Member States will probably try to maintain its status quo, wasting the opportunity to use this method to achieve a sustainable water/food link.

There is a need for strategic management planning that can be used as a participatory tool able to create and implement bureaucratic alternatives from the previous control measures of the MBPS. Priorities must be set by the Member States as well as the organisations representing the irrigated sector. The broad strategic management planning (SMP) at a Member State (MS) level involves a funding policy on socially identified and recognised intervention needs, the identification of objectives and indicators, the selection of the best available measures that can effectively contribute to the achievement of the established objectives. Considering the bureaucracies in each country, the delicate situation of the economic situation and the influence of the agricultural policy on irrigated agriculture, it is likely that an important part of the states will probably try to maintain its status quo, wasting the opportunity to reverse the 'I think this is a good way to achieve a sustainable water/food link'.

A strategic management planning is required that can replace the previous bureaucratic control mechanisms of the MBPS. Priorities must be established by the Member States in collaboration with the organisations representing irrigated agriculture, such as the Land Reclamation Consortia, in Italy.

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