Improving Water Resilience in Rural Areas

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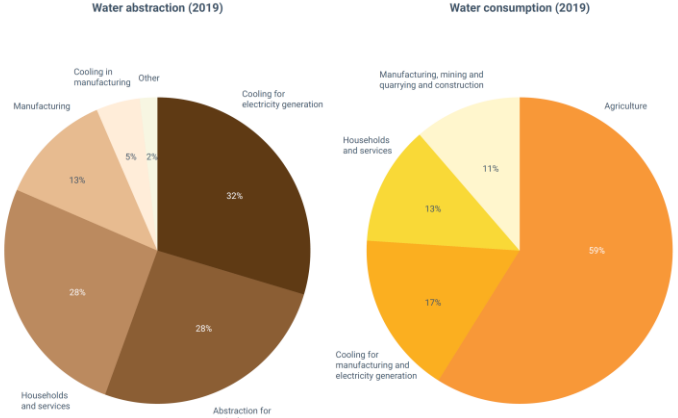
Context

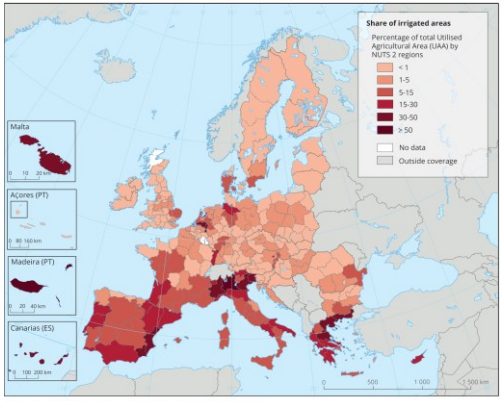
- Water stress affects 30% of EU land area and 34% of EU population every year
- Agriculture is the most significant pressure on water resources, both quantity (abstraction, drainage, erosion and runoff) and quality
- Large differences across regions – southern parts of the EU face the greatest pressures
- Increasing risks of water scarcity, intense droughts (e.g. 2022 drought event) as well as flood risks (incl. mudslides)

Figure 4.2 Annual water and abstraction by economic sector in the EU27



Source: Adapted from EEA, 2022f.

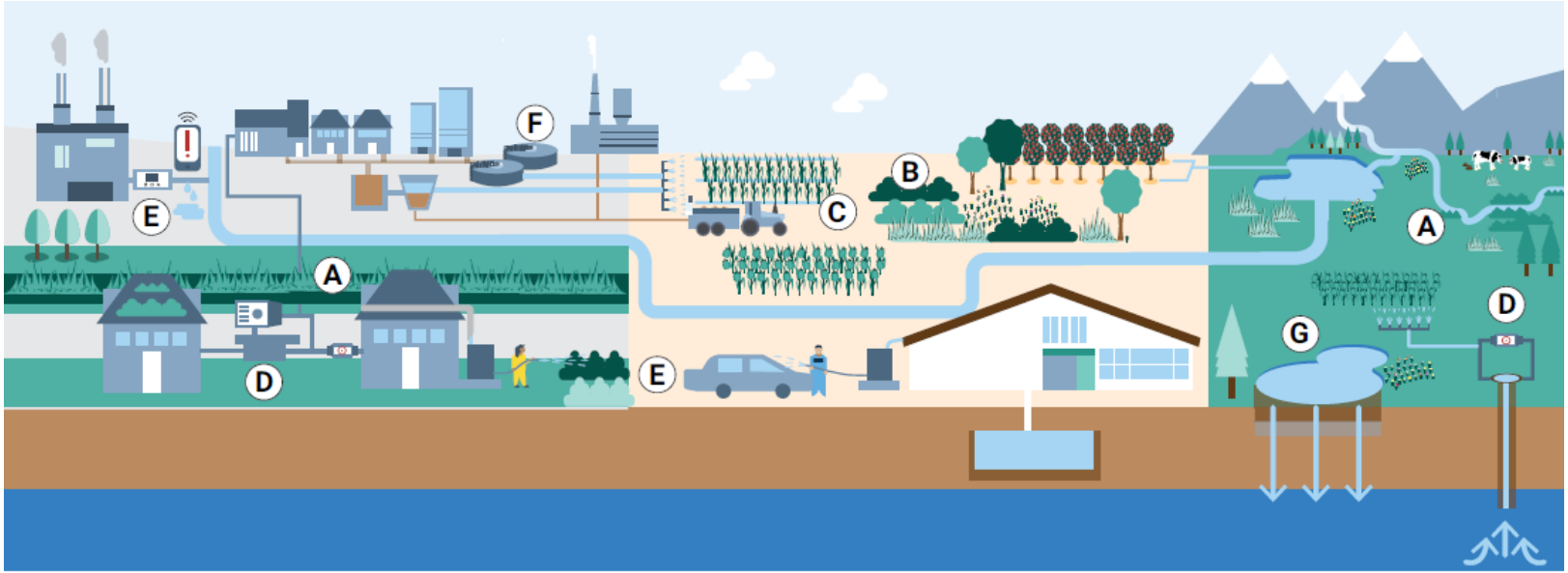
Map 3.3 Share of irrigated areas per NUTS 2 regions in the EU-28



Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat. Source: Eurostat

Source: ESTAT (2019b).

Water is a shared resource and water resources are all interconnected



(A) Natural water retention measures: green infrastructure, swales, floodplain restoration

(B) Sustainable farming: restoring soil carbon which holds water, riparian buffers, woody features

(C) Changing crops for less water-intensive species

(D) Metering, abstraction control and enforcement

(E) Water saving and demand reduction: leakage control, water use efficiency, economic incentives

(F) Water re-use, rainwater harvesting, desalination if using sustainable energy and preventing pollution by brine

(G) Groundwater recharge

Source: EEA, 2024

Vision for a water resilient agricultural landscape

Measures to restore the natural hydrology and morphology of rivers, lakes, and wetlands, and increase soil water retention.

Water	1	Temporary storage of floodwater on agricultural fields
	2	Drainage ban and restriction
	3	Bans or restrictions on ploughing, grazing or mowing along water courses
Landscape features	4	Hedgerows, individual or group of trees, trees in line
	5	Field margins, patches and unproductive buffer strips along water courses
	6	Ponds
	7	Small wetlands
	8	Meandering streams
	9	Agroforestry
	10	Management of wetland and peatland
Crop rotation or diversification	11	Land laying fallow
Soil management	12	Reduced tillage
	13	Soil cover
Grazing and grassland management	14	Rotational resting of grassland
	15	Ban of ploughing of grassland
	16	Conversion of arable land to grassland

Classification of farm practices according to the European Commission

MERLiN

www.project-merlin.eu merlin-project merlin-eu
MERLINproject.eu freshwaterblog.net

The MERLIN project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101036337.

Water retention is a key lever to build water resilience (water stress, flood risk) in agriculture and rural landscapes

Thematic Group on Improving Water Resilience in Rural Areas through the CAP

Overall aim: to examine how to **best utilise the CAP's potential for improving water resilience in rural areas and promote more systemic transformative changes in the way water and land are managed to enable rural areas to withstand climate extremes better** and how this can be best supported through the CSPs.

- 40 members from 20 countries and EU
- Website

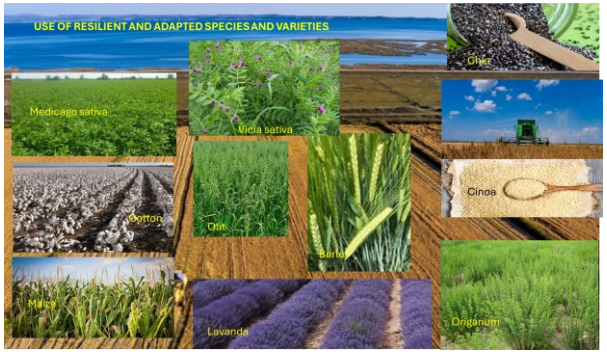
Outputs from the TG

- Background paper
- Highlights reports of first and second meeting
- Compendium of good practice examples (publication pending)
  - CSP Interventions
  - Catchment scale / landscape scale approaches
  - Improved water governance / collaborative approaches
  - Technical solutions
  - Advice and knowledge sharing

#CSPImplementation

Examples

Use of **resilient and adapted species and varieties** (Greek eco-scheme)



Nature-based solutions
Rehydrating a landscape: La Nava del Conejo (Spain)

Technical solutions

- Water harvesting systems (e.g. IT)
- Re-use of treated water (e.g. Cyprus, Spain)
- Improving the efficiency of irrigation networks (e.g. Italy, Portugal, Spain)

Nature-based solutions
DRAVA LIFE Integrated River Management (Croatia)

Advice & Capacity Building

TIC4BIO

How to stimulate greater action?

Strategic planning required to inform action at landscape scale

Governance: greater collaboration at catchment level (farmers, other water users, public bodies)

Demonstration sites needed to show new approaches in action

Focus on an holistic approach to water resilience – water, soils, biodiversity (use Nature based solutions)

Funding available over longer periods – 10-20 years (public & private

Good quality advice and training – advisers need up to date skills & technological knowledge

Active engagement & training with farmers to help change mindsets

Thank you for listening!

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