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Press Release

Water re-use and smart farming key ways to improve water quality and to save on water resources

Copa and Cogeca underlined the great strides European farmers and cooperatives have made in improving the quality of Europe's freshwater at a launch event for the European Environment Agency "State of Water" report 2018.

The report shows that thanks to implementation of European water legislation in the Member States, the quality of Europe's freshwater is constantly improving, but work remains to be done.

Speaking at the event, Chairman of Copa and Cogeca's Environment Working Party Niels Peter Norring said "Significant environmental progress has been made by EU farmers and cooperatives in the last decade, as a result of the tough environmental rules in place under the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**. The farming sector will continue to contribute to using water more sustainably. One of the main priorities under the future CAP is tackling environmental issues".

"In this context, **precision farming** is playing a vital role. Through smart farming, we will be able to manage natural resources more efficiently and minimize the environmental impact. For this, training and advisory services as well as knowledge exchange and financial incentives need to be strengthened. Water storage and **water re-use** are also important strategies to reduce the amount of freshwater we use and to further improve on-farm water use efficiency", added Norring.

"But some important issues remain unsolved. Nutrient leaching from broken, old or undersized sewage systems into the groundwater is a problem, which is not sufficiently recognized. In addition, untreated rainwater from urban areas and medicinal residues from human use contain high concentrations of substances harmful to the water quality. The negative impact of climate change on water ecosystems, especially for lakes and rivers, also remains underestimated. This situation will get worse in view of the increasing levels of drought. We therefore have to be realistic and accept that in the near future we will not be able to achieve the goals set out by the Water Framework Directive", Norring concluded.

For further information, please contact:

Valentin Opfermann

Sennior Policy Advisor

Tel.: +32 2 287 27 95

Valentin.Opfermann@copa-cogeca.eu

Amanda Cheesley

Press Officer

Mobile: + 32 474 840 836

amanda.cheesley@copa-cogeca.eu

CDP(18)5225:1
