



Report from

Joint policy conference

The role of EU policies and in addressing drinking water
management challenges

7 December 2018

Marina Pintar, Gerard Velthof, Sandra Boekhold, Sindre Langaas, Matjaž Glavan (all FairWay) and
Alexandru Marchis (WaterProtect)



This projects has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727450 and 727984

A joint FairWay and WaterProtect (<https://water-protect.eu/>) projects conference organised in Brussels, on 7 December 2018 with high level speakers from European Commission and European stakeholders attracted the attention of more than 50 participants (Figure 1). They contributed to a debate on policy solutions and bottom-up initiatives for sustainable management of water resources.



Figure 1: Participants of Joint policy conference of WaterProtect and FairWay project in Brussels, 7 Dec. 2018

According to the DoW this conference was also a milestone (MS21 – Workshop with actors at EU level) of FairWay in a frame of WP7 – Integration and recommendations at EU level.

Background of the conference was an actual European dialogue on sustainability of the farming sector currently marked by the discussions on the new EU multi-annual financing framework and implicitly by the discussions of the role, scope and focus of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In parallel, discussions are conducted on the review of several water related policy instruments and the adoption of new frameworks.

The main objective of the conference was to seek stakeholder perspectives on pathways for integration and building synergies within EU agricultural and environmental policies that effectively address challenges of nitrate and pesticide pollution of drinking water resources.

The interim findings and the analysis produced in the two projects was presented in the joint presentation by both coordinators (**Gerard Velthof** for FairWay and **Piet Seuntjens** for WaterProtect) to be discussed and contextualized with stakeholders prior to the next phase of the assessment.

Introductory presentations provided a plethora of interesting starting points.

Nenad Peric from **Copa-Cogeca** stressed the importance of water for agriculture; that there is no food without water. His opinion is that there is potential in innovative solutions for solving these issues: for example precision farming, big data use etc. He pointed out that the gap between science and end users – farmers is still a challenge. The new CAP includes a more bottom up approach as member states will have more power to adopt measures to local circumstances.

Arjen Frentz presented the view on limiting agricultural pressure on water resources, the vision of **EurEau** and its position in the future CAP. He stressed that water and agriculture are intrinsically linked and presented some good examples of cooperation between water utilities and farmers. There is a need for better implementation of existing EU legislation. It is vital

that the new CAP protects the quality and quantity of water resources through an effective conditionality mechanism. Ecoschemes could contribute to “blueing” the CAP.

Jeremy Dyson from **ECPA** – European Crop Protection Association - presented the TOPPS approach i.e. the provision of a comprehensive »umbrella« for water protection, covering the key sources and pathways of pesticide transfer to water. It helps farmers to keep water clean. It started as an EU funded LIFE project in 2005. In TOPPS, they developed best management practice regarding pesticide use. The condition for success is that it also contains (not necessarily business) benefits for the farmer. He stressed the importance of encouraging key stakeholders to work together.

Tobias Biermann from **DG Environment**, European Commission, spoke about recasting of the Drinking water Directive, also based on the triannual report of large water supplies 2011-2013 on the quality of drinking water. He emphasized that research projects often are not in time adjusted to the needs of policy. A new regulatory approach regarding drinking water is the Holistic Risk-Based Approach instead of the former Compliance at the tap Approach.

Ermis Panigiatopoulos from the **European Federation of Bottled Water** (EFBW). He explained the difference between tap and spring or natural mineral water. The last two ones must be safe to drink at the source in their natural state, so there is a need for a close cooperation between farmers, communities, NGOs and bottled water producers to avoid pollution at catchment level. EFBW is a partner in the WaterProtect project with the role to share examples of best practices in France, Switzerland and Austria. The speaker presented the example of bottled water Evian and stressed the participative protection strategy.

Elisabeth Bömcke from **Fertilizers Europe**. The situation regarding fertilizer use varies across Europe. There is a lot of potential for smart technology (e.g. use of GPS, sensors, satellite images, etc.). Accurate reports are produced to allow farmers to use the right product, at the right rate in the right place and at the right time. Nitrogen Use Efficiency is one of the key for better nutrient stewardship.

Valentin Opferman from **DG Agriculture**, European Commission spoke about CAP post 2020 and water-related aspects. Main pressures on Water in the EU from agriculture is nutrient loading and water abstraction. One of the three general objectives of the CAP is to bolster environmental care and climate action and to contribute to the environmental- and climate-related objectives of the Union. Knowledge and Innovation is vital for enhancing sustainable water management. He saw opportunities for a new role of Farm Advisory Services (FAS). It shall cover economic, environmental and social dimensions and can be integrated within the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS). From the beginning, the CAP was for farmer’s income. Now it's more than that and should be viewed wider.

Per-Erik Mellander from **Johnstown Castle Environmental Research Centre**, presented the Irish Action Lab from the WaterProtect project. He stressed the Multi actor approach where farmers learn from each other as an important source of knowledge for the farmers.

Matjaž Glavan from **University of Ljubljana** presented the Slovene case study from the FairWay project. He explained real problems farmers have in practice in the water protection zone in Dravsko polje (Slovenian case study).

Maša Žagar from **Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Slovenia** explained the CAP and water-related aspects on national level. How it is transferred from EU level into national legislation and where are still open challenges (e.g. new agreement on compensation payments for the reduction in income from agricultural activities required after 2020).

Further discussions with attendees were consistent and the main points to be extracted from the debate are:

- Water and agriculture stakeholders are all keen and ready to engage in developing and deploying solutions for better water management
- Bottom-up initiatives driven by the agricultural input providers (i.e. fertilisers, pesticides) already exist to stimulate adoption of best management practices, but there is also a call for more training to farmers for implementation;
- Smart farming is an area where further solutions can be developed;
- The new CAP implementation mechanism, through the National Strategic Plans is an opportunity to promote tailor-made solutions to the water management challenges at national, regional and local level;
- It is important for the farming community that monitoring of the status of the water resources recognises the progress that was made to incentivise farmers to further take additional measures;
- Water industry stakeholders are calling for a long-term approach for the management of the water resources since pollution impact can be felt for decades;
- Good examples of cooperation between farmers and water industry already exist throughout Europe, their results should be disseminated
- The EU policies are evolving to take into account these new realities of the interactions between water and agriculture and they provide new opportunities and tools for action.

Stakeholders attending the event and the representatives of the two scientific projects have committed to continue the important dialog on developing and promoting solutions to enhance the synergies between water policies and agricultural policies at EU, national and local level.

The conference was moderated by Gert-Jan de Maagd.

We kindly acknowledge the hospitality of the Permanent Representation of Slovenia in EU where the venue was and Slovenian Business and Research Association (<https://www.sbra.be/sl>) for technical support in organisation of the event.

Link to photos from the event:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/SlovenianBusinessResearchAssociation/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2495530427128880

Annex: The agenda of the event



WaterProtect and FAIRWAY projects have received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 727450 and 727984

The role of EU policies in addressing drinking water management challenges involving the agricultural sector

Venue : Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the EU,
Rue de Commerce 44, Brussels
December 7th, 2018.

Register here: https://eu_water_agri_policies.eventbrite.co.uk

Agenda

8.30 – 9.00 Registration and welcome

9.00 –9.45 Introduction/setting the scene

- o WaterProtect - Policy Analysis report and governance models
- o FAIRWAY - Governance arrangements and legislative analysis
Q&A and discussion on project findings

9.45 – 10.45 Session Ia. Interactions and policy synergies at EU level

- o Priorities, bottlenecks and bottom-up initiatives to address agriculture and water management challenges (15 min each)
Nenad Peric, Copa-Cogeca
Arjen Frentz, EurEau – European Federation of National Associations of Water Services
Jeremy Dyson, ECPA – European Crop Protection Association
- o Discussion and policy contextualization with the European Commission
Tobias Biermann, DG Environment, European Commission

10.45-11.15 Coffee break

11.15 – 12.30 Session Ib. (cont.) Interactions and policy synergies at EU level

- o Priorities, bottlenecks and bottom-up initiatives to address agriculture and water management challenges (15 min each)
Ermis Panagiotopoulos, European Federation of Bottled Waters
Elisabeth Bomcke, Fertilisers Europe
- o Discussion and policy contextualization with the European Commission
Valentin Opfermann, DG Agriculture, European Commission
- o *Open debate with the participants*



Waterprotect and FAIRWAY projects have received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 727450 and 727384

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch

13.30- 14.30 Session II. Governance and implementation at national/regional or local level

- Case studies from the two projects
 - WaterProtect**
 - FAIRWAY**
- The national and regional approach to water management and synergies with agriculture
 - Maša Žagar, Ministry of Agriculture Slovenia**
 - (tbc) Regional government
- *Open debate with the participants*

Conclusions and recommendations