



WATER STEWARDSHIP IN AGRICULTURE

As agriculture is responsible for a third of Europe's water use, farmers are key players in sustainable river basin management. Given the essential nature of water to agricultural production, farmers have a special interest to address current and future water risks in order to assure the integrity of their businesses.

Diverse production types, geographical locations and means of production signifies that the way water is managed will largely be shaped by the local context of the river basin. Water Stewardship is a tool for farmers to acknowledge local variables while optimizing economic benefits linked to improving sustainable water use.


IS WATER IN YOUR BUSINESS PLAN?

As farmers recognize the importance of water for production, it already plays an important role in most business plans. Water availability, quality and energy costs or subsidies all must be considered for short and long-term planning on a farm. Understanding the farm's water sources, discharges and the social and legal context of the river basin help shape business decisions – particularly long-term investments for building and irrigation equipment. Thus optimizing water use is a clear step towards direct savings!

Water Stewardship allows farmers to identify concrete advantages linked to water use by initiating partnerships with policy makers or private partners who value farm ecosystem services, or by avoiding water shortages or anticipating regulatory requirements. Water Stewardship is the ultimate tool for farmers to appreciate ALL water associated risks and opportunities in their daily business!

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EWS FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION?

Becoming a water steward by implementing the **EWS standard** provides direct benefits to agriculture as farmers:

-  Identify and respond to farm's local water risks.
-  Consider long-term planning and investments.
-  Build trust with retailers and clients.
-  Make water a central element of business plans.
-  Receive recognition for improvements with a system approved by EU authorities

Water Stewardship is based on three steps to: **'assess, act and improve'**. EWS implementation guides a farm or group of farmers to implement Best Management Practices for water management for continuous improvements in water use, including efficiency and quality.

Water Stewardship allows farmers to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable use of water at catchment level while anticipating the future economic and social robustness of the farm for the long term sustainability of their business

MORE INFORMATION ON EWS & AGRICULTURE

For more information on findings from EWS implementation in agriculture please contact jdansembourg@ewp.eu.



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	WATER RELATED CHALLENGES FOR AGRICULTURE
Water Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As water is one principle resource of agricultural production, farmers need to have a clear understanding of all risks involved in water management. • Need for continuous monitoring and reporting on water use, particularly in water stressed areas. is essential to stay in business. • Possibilities to explore alternative water sources or supply options relevant for the River Basin.
Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrient management is a key management priority, with a need for specific measures in place to reduce negative impacts of runoff and leaching. • Identification of priority substances and pollutants used on the farm is essential for compliance with regulatory measures.
Water & energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve water efficiency as a means to reduce energy consumption and its associated costs.
Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate opportunities to reduce losses and optimize water use into a business plan. • Bring innovation to the field by providing farmers with concrete information on existing and new management practices and techniques. • Act as a leader in the River Basin to ensure the long term resilience of the farm.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR WATER CYCLE

A clear idea of your water cycle, by identifying where water comes from and where it goes, indicates your farm-specific water risks as well as opportunities for improvement. Assessment with the EWS standard assists you in identifying your own water cycle while also providing an exhaustive analysis disclosing major improvement points for the sustainable water management of your farm operations. EWS provides both single farm and group assessment as well as general stewardship trainings for farmers. To learn more about these opportunities **see our website**.

WORKING TOGETHER

The impact that agricultural production has on a river basin, particularly in intensive production zones, has real consequences for both water quality and water availability. As key water users in the river basin, farmers can take the lead in developing partnerships at a local level! There are numerous benefits to collective action between production sites, with small-scale farmers working with each other and other water users in their river basin to assess and improve their water management. Take action by learning about existing and possibilities for collective actions with the **Local Deals initiative**.