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Irrigation management by water users associations: case studies in the regions of Apulia, Epirus and Western Greece

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Abstract:

Application of good agricultural practices is one of the key factors for achieving the objective of good ecological status of European waters under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). In Greece and Italy, FAO's Aquastat, recorded that more than 80% and 50% respectively, of the available freshwater resources are used for irrigation purposes. In Greece and Italy both central and local public authorities are responsible for the development, implementation and application control of irrigation and drainage legislative framework. The management of irrigation and drainage systems is locally done by Land Reclamation Consortia (or Water Users Associations (WUA)), mainly when surface water bodies are used as water sources, while most of drillings are private. In the frame work of IRMA project a number of tools has been developed for the improvement of irrigation efficiency in the regions of Puglia in Italy where 400.000ha of agricultural land is equipped for irrigation and for the regions of Epirus and Western Greece in Greece, where the relevant area is 51.000 and 150.000ha respectively. One of these tools was the in depth registration of irrigation practices in the project's area. This was expected to significantly assist all relevant stakeholders to draw their future irrigation strategy. A set of questionnaires was developed to support the survey. The present study focuses on the analysis of the results regarding WUA's. This questionnaire was distributed to irrigation associations that collect the relevant information about water and energy costs, crops, economic data and main perception and issues related to climate change and environmental problems. The reality of WUAs in the study areas of Greece and Italy are presented, highlighting differences and similarities of water management in agricultural area, understanding what are the major issues related with the environmental, economic and social sustainability of agricultural livelihoods in the study area. The results of this study helps to understand the reality of study area and provide guidance to stakeholders to improve water management and be in line with WFD.

Keywords*: Water management, Water Users Association, (maximum 5 keywords)*

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