A single rate of irrigation water for Spain

Irrigators Southeast Spanish, represented by the Federation of Irrigators of Almería (FERAL) and the Central Union of Irrigation Aqueduct Tajo-Segura (SCRATS) have submitted a joint proposal for the establishment of a new public model of water management which contributes to promoting equal opportunities between different fruit and vegetable production areas around the country and the implementation of infrastructure for interconnection between basins. Among the main points of this document, the irrigators of Almeria, Murcia and Alicante demand the government a single price of irrigation water for the whole Spain.

A belief of both organizations irrigators, "establish a single rate of irrigation water throughout the country should be one of the priorities for the Government resulting from the elections on June 26". As has been pointed out, "this is an issue that now should already be under consideration, as announced the Minister of Agriculture, Isabel García Tejerina, after approving in October 2015 the spot price reduction of desalinated water for users of the Tajo-Segura ". In any case, both irrigators' organizations claim that the government "meets once its promises and implement a national water policy, now that it has completed the water planning in all Spanish basins," said Manuel Martinez, member Board of SCRATS.

To justify its proposal for a single price of water, irrigators establish a comparison with the Spanish electricity system. "All Spaniards paid the same price per kilowatt / hour, regardless of fare differences depending on their origin, distance covered, or the type of energy that created it," said

the president of FERAL Jose Antonio Fernandez, who underlined that the establishment of a single price of irrigation water would eliminate the comparative grievances between producers from different areas of Spain. "A single price would treat first irrigation water as a public good that everyone should have access, thus ensuring economic and social interests of the food industry that generates tens of thousands of jobs in the three provinces."

Irrigators Tajo-Segura have denounced the situation of uncertainty by passing each time they have to plan planting the next crop. In that sense, from the SCRATS it points to the urgent need for a lasting solution in time to allow farmers to organize campaign basis, and always know that they will have enough water to meet their orders.

Promote infrastructure interconnection basins, and the internal connection within each basin, is another of the joint demands of irrigators in Almeria, Murcia and Alicante. FERAL and SCRATS urgent appeal to the execution of projects that allow water available where needed, so that a reservoir can be receiver and transferor, depending on the needs of each moment.

Alternative forms of water supply

It is also claimed by the competent authorities to do everything necessary to ensure alternative water resources that provide stability and ensure the survival of crops. In this sense, the irrigators claim that in addition to the transfers as a major resource for these hydrically deficit areas, all possible resources are contemplated, such as surface water, groundwater, reclaimed and, ultimately, desalination. FERAL and SCRATS have also requested the development and implementation of new irrigation techniques to achieve savings of scarce resources.

One of the interconnection works that claim to the province of Almeria is the Highway Water for interconnecting reservoirs Benínar and Almanzora, indirectly including the waters of the transfers of Negratín and the Tajo-Segura, and desalination plants of Carboneras and Balerma. This enormous project, which began in 2002 and is now paralyzed would distribute water from diverse origins between the west, Nijar and the Almanzora, in both directions and as needed. Water Highway could, in turn, connect to the Swamp Rules, so that it is communicated with the Almeria province of Granada through two reservoirs. This will provide much greater security to irrigation, water quality and reasonably priced, sharing all available resources.

Specific support to renewable energy

Irrigators in the three provinces also agree on the need for measures to ensure new contributions to the Segura basin, either through the headend or by other water resources infrastructure. "It is important to remind the competent authorities that water planning must meet technical criteria, since water should not be used in any case as a political weapon," said Carlos Germán Escudero, a member of the Board of SCRATS representing the irrigators in Alicante.

Approve new complementary transfers to existing, completing the full water cycle, and encourage rainwater collection are some of the proposals contained in the joint document, in which the interests of the irrigators southeast Spanish is also reflected by getting support specific to promote the use of renewable energy in irrigation, thus reducing energy costs.

The document signed by FERAL and SCRATS also contains a number of measures to improve water governance, such as the establishment of the Central Boards Users that have not yet been launched in the area of ??aquifers declared overexploited, and authorization irrigation concessions that have been pending for years for communities of irrigators who have requested them. This working document will be moved to different electoral candidates, in order that it be incorporated into government actions of the next legislature.

Source: FERAL and SCRATS