Board warns the Government that if it closes the transfer of the Negratín will harm the agriculture of the Bajo Almanzora

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Minister, Rodrigo Sánchez Haro, has called on the Central Government to offer guarantees that it will not close the Negratín-Almanzora transfer in August, as farmers in the Bajo Almanzora region fear. This cut in supply would be an "enormous loss" for the more than 24,000 hectares of crops and 10,000 irrigators (citrus, horticultural and some greenhouses) in this area of the province of Almeria, which depend on a 70 % of the waters of this transfer.

Sánchez Haro made the remarks during the meeting held on June 25th in Huércal-Overa (Almería) with the Central Board of Users of the Aguas del Almanzora Irrigation Community, to which he has transmitted that he shares his concern with a possible closure of the transfer which, if the current rainfall shortage is maintained, could take place at the end of August.

The Minister has ensured that since the Board will take all measures to require the central

> Government to take into account the critical situation in which would remain crops that generate 20,000 direct and indirect jobs

The Commission for the Desembalse of the Guadalquivir Basin authorized last April a transfer for this year of 50 cubic hectometres of Negratín al Almanzora*. This volume of water, however, would now be in question because the regulations establish that only resources can be transferred when the volume stored in the basin from which they come (in this case, the Guadalquivir) exceeds a minimum of 30% reservoir capacity. Farmers fear that this minimum percentage required in the Guadalquivir Basin could be reached in a couple of months, which would cut the arrival of water from the Negratín.*

Given this situation, the Minister of Agriculture has called on the central government to "promote a decree-law or legal solution deemed appropriate to ensure the transfer authorized for this year," despite the restrictions established and that the general system of the basin is below 30% of its capacity, given the catastrophic damage suffered by irrigators.

> According to the councilor, the Negratín reservoir currently has water (it is 47% of capacity) and the volume extracted by the transfer (50 cubic hectometres) "does not have a significant impact on the whole system of general regulation of the Guadalquivir"

Situation of abandonment

For Sánchez Haro, *this claim is "especially fair because the abandonment to which the central government has submitted to the province of Almeria has led to no alternative resources" for those affected by this situation.*

In this sense, he regretted that "it is unjustifiable" that the desalination plant of Cuevas del Almanzora has been almost unusable for five years because of the flood that it suffered in September 2012. *"The government of Rajoy has failed four years in the* General Budgets of the State*, because includes the repair but then does not execute it and to date has not invested a single euro". Taking into account that the capacity of this desalination plant was about 15 cubic hectometres a year, resources equivalent to 75 cubic hectometres have been lost during these years.*

> Rodrigo Sánchez has criticized the lack of involvement of the central government to alleviate the water deficit in the province of Almeria

Thus, it has again demanded that it carry out outstanding projects such as the expansion of the Carboneras desalination plant and the desalination plants of Balsa del Sapo and Adra, in addition

to the expansion of the El Ejido, Roquetas and Adra treatment plants, *which would allowthe use in irrigation of the treated waters.*

The Andalusian councilor has claimed that "the price of desalinated water produced by the desalination plants of the province of Almería" is lowered, as is done with those of Alicante and Murcia, and has stressed the need for a national water law desalinated

The Minister of Agriculture has countered the "inaction of the central executive" with the "commitment" of the Andalusian Government, recalling the speed of the Andalusian Administration to undertake emergency works with which were replaced the pipelines after the floods, in September 2012, left very affected to the regions of Levante and Almanzora. *He also recalled that in recent years the Board has allocated more than 40 million euros to improve agricultural infrastructure in the province of Almeria, investing in roads and irrigation.*

Source: CAPDER

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