The Minister inaugurates the National Congress of Irrigators with the presentation of the National Irrigation Strategy 2018 - 2025

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment, Isabel García Tejerina, announced today that in the next few days the first draft of the National Irrigation Strategy 2018 - 2025 will be discussed together with the representatives of the agrarian sector. of the Ministry to guide actions in the medium term, he added, that he conceives irrigation as a key element to promote sustainable rural development, to achieve a productive, efficient, resilient, competitive and profitable agriculture and to fight against depopulation.

García Tejerina, who opened Monday with the president of the Generalitat Valenciana, Ximo Puig, the XIV National Congress of Irrigators' Communities, in Torrevieja (Alicante), has presented in this forum the objectives of this Strategy, which has highlighted, poses As a challenge, the modernization of the 800,000 hectares of irrigated land that can be modernized.

To this end, the minister said, a diagnosis has been made of the weaknesses, strengths and opportunities of the sector to define the five strategic objectives that are proposed, such as improving the efficiency in the use of water and energy; the generation of employment and wealth, especially in areas threatened by depopulation; the search for efficiency in financing the actions;

the improvement of the regulatory framework and the promotion of innovation and training, as well as the awareness of society on the key role of irrigation.

Objectives of the national strategy

Thus, in terms of improving the water and energy efficiency of irrigation, García Tejerina explained that to complete the modernization process, stimulate effective water savings and guarantee the irrigator greater availability, the Strategy contemplates water, energy and water audits. of management. It also provides, has indicated, the generalization of the measurement of water consumption by irrigators, and reward the most efficient users and penalize individual consumption exceeding the average endowment of the area.

To generate employment and fix the population to rural areas, another of the objectives of the Strategy, the minister has indicated that the development of integrated plans in areas of intensive cultivation is being considered, prioritizing the completion of all the investments that already are underway by the Ministry, before carrying out new irrigation.

In relation to the improvement of the regulatory framework and governance, García Tejerina has stated that the role of Irrigation Communities is to be strengthened, giving them a greater legal, technical and operational capacity, increasing their size and favoring their participation in supranational organizations. . Some lines of action, he pointed out, that will join the promotion of training and the improvement of the capacities of the managers and technicians of the Irrigation Communities.

Regarding the promotion of innovation, one of the essential axes of the Rural Development National Program, which has 57 million euros, explained the minister, the creation of operational groups related to irrigation will be promoted, having been approved in its first call, resolved in 2017, two proposals worth almost 100,000 euros aimed at optimizing the use of water and energy resources.

In this area he has also pointed out the importance of new information and communication technologies, the digitization of the sector and the use of Big Data, as indispensable tools to face the necessary changes, and announced that next June 11 will be presented the Agenda for the Digitization of the Agrifood Sector and the Rural Environment.

As a complement to these actions García Tejerina has highlighted the need to promote awareness of society through communication, to transfer to citizens and markets the value of sustainable irrigation. For this reason, he explained that the Ministry will promote communication actions, which also requires, he pointed out, the commitment of everyone to the best practices and the best agriculture.

Finally, in terms of efficiency in financing, the minister recalled that until 2020, the autonomous

communities have programmed, within the framework of their rural development programs, investments in an area of ??more than 250,000 hectares, with an estimated public expenditure of 500 million euros, to which the Ministry contributes with a financing of 30% of the total national contribution.

However, he pointed out, there are still another 555,000 hectares to be faced, the modernization of which has an estimated cost of 2,500 million euros, so the Ministry will continue betting on collaboration with the Communities of irrigators, through the State Mercantile Society of Infrastructures. Agrarias, SEIASA, to carry out the planned actions, in the most efficient manner.

In order to achieve these objectives, the minister explained that an individualized follow-up of the actions to be carried out and another of a general and periodic nature on the sustainability of the main Spanish irrigation areas will be carried out, for which the Ministry will enable collaboration systems and channels of regular and agile communication with the Communities of Irrigators.

The Government, García Tejerina has concluded, is promoting a National Strategy that will allow our irrigation to prepare in the best possible way for an increasingly demanding scenario from the environmental point of view and adaptation to climate change, growing at the same time in competitiveness and profitability, with the maximum possible efficiency.

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