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FEAD feedback on Call for evidence for European Water Resilience Strategy

FEAD welcomes the European Commission's initiative to enhance the EU's water resilience.

As water management becomes one of the most pressing challenges in the fight against climate change, modernizing and adapting drinking water and wastewater treatment infrastructure is essential to improving water efficiency in line with the Green Deal's objectives.

FEAD recognizes that the Union's water resources are increasingly under pressure, leading to both temporary and permanent water scarcity in certain regions. To address this issue, we support broader reuse of treated urban wastewater and investments in water reuse technologies, including AI-driven solutions for smart water management. Effective wastewater and treated water monitoring is crucial in this process.

Moreover, FEAD believes that stronger monitoring of contaminants is particularly necessary, as these persistent pollutants pose significant risks across ecosystems. FEAD strongly supports the phasing out of these substances at the production stage to limit their presence in the cycle. This proactive approach will help "close the tap" on contaminants. Where elimination of contaminants in industrial processes is not feasible, capture solutions must be implemented, and treatment solutions should be financed under the 'polluter pays' principle. Additionally, harmonized measurement methods and analysis should be introduced, alongside mandatory obligations to provide information in the supply chain.

The recent revision of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD) has already introduced important advancements, including the mandatory fourth treatment stage for micropollutant removal, extended producer responsibility, and strengthened phosphorus recycling after wastewater treatment. However, more focus should be put on water reuse – an issue directly tackled in this initiative. Water reuse systems, along with rainwater storage, can play a key role in mitigating the impacts of increasing droughts.

Member States should therefore be required to introduce water reuse systems in areas particularly affected by drought and for the irrigation of public green areas. Additionally, treated wastewater can replace drinking water for non-potable purposes such as irrigating green spaces and street cleaning, thereby strengthening EU industrial competitiveness and promoting the 'water efficiency first' principle.

FEAD remains open to further discussions and looks forward to contributing to future policy developments.

FEAD is the European Waste Management Association, representing the private waste and resource management industry across Europe, including 20 national waste management federations and 3,000 waste management companies. Private waste management companies operate in 60% of municipal waste markets in Europe and in 75% of industrial and commercial waste. This means more than 320,000 local jobs, fuelling €5 billion of investments into the economy every year. For more information, please contact:

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