

SIGNED LETTER

PROPOSED EU WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE REVISION



Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President for a Clean, Just and Competitive Transition

Jessika Roswall, Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

Christophe Hansen, Commissioner for Agriculture and Food

Brussels, 28 September 2026

Subject: Upholding the ambition of the EU's action for water resilience and security in the context of the Water Framework Directive revision

Dear President, Executive Vice-President, dear Commissioners,

*We are writing on behalf of a group of European food retailers and supply-chain businesses that source agricultural and food products from across the European Union. Our businesses depend on resilient freshwater systems and sustainable agricultural production across Europe, and we therefore follow closely the Commission's ongoing work concerning the **revision of the Water Framework Directive (WFD)**.*

For retailers and supply-chain businesses with complex sourcing arrangements, sustainable sourcing depends not only on the actions taken within individual supply chains, but also on the condition and governance of the wider water environment in the landscapes from which we source. The resilience of European agriculture, food production, and rural economies depends fundamentally on healthy and sustainably managed freshwater ecosystems.

As witnessed this Summer, water-related risks are already affecting business operations and supply chains across Europe through drought, water scarcity, flooding, declining water quality, and ecosystem degradation. According to the European Environment Agency, water stress already affects 30% of Europe's territory, and these pressures are expected to intensify as climate change accelerates. Long-term business confidence therefore depends in part on assurance that Europe's freshwater systems are being protected against further degradation and restored credibly, consistently and predictably.

In our view, the Water Framework Directive provides a robust and necessary framework for freshwater protection and water resilience across the European Union. Strong, harmonised and enforceable water standards help support operational continuity, long-term investment planning, resilient supply chains and consumer confidence in European food production. They also provide an important level playing field across the Single Market.

We note that the Commission's 2019 Fitness Check concluded that the Directive was fit for purpose, and that persistent shortcomings in water quality and ecosystem health are primarily linked to implementation and enforcement gaps rather than deficiencies in the Directive's core architecture.

The recent call for evidence also showed a large support from a majority of respondents, including water-reliant businesses, for upholding current standards.

We therefore encourage the Commission to prioritise the full and effective implementation and enforcement of the existing framework, based on the recently published guidance for the implementation of the WFD during the permitting of new projects and existing activities.

We would be concerned by any changes that weaken core principles of the WFD, reduce legal certainty, weaken implementation or enforcement, dilute the existing level of freshwater protection, or increase the risk of further deterioration of rivers, lakes and groundwater. In particular, weakening safeguards or broadening derogations in ways that allow additional deterioration of water bodies would risk increasing long-term physical, operational and financial risks for sectors dependent on reliable water resources, including food and agriculture.

From our perspective as businesses operating across the European food system, long-term competitiveness depends not on weaker environmental safeguards, but on resilient natural resources, predictable regulation, credible governance and confidence that water-related risks are being managed effectively. Strong water protection standards also support innovation, investment in water efficiency and treatment solutions, and more resilient agricultural production systems.

We therefore strongly encourage the Commission to retain the existing level of freshwater protection afforded by the Water Framework Directive and refrain from revising it.

Yours faithfully,

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