



GSI Global Subsidies Initiative

iisd International Institute for Sustainable Development Institut international du développement durable



The importance of the irrigation sector for all: a seminar on irrigation subsidies in the northern Mediterranean

21 February 2011

The Regente Hotel, Mesonero Romanos, 9 - 28013 - Madrid – Spain

Governments around the world spend billions of Euros on irrigation subsidies, with far reaching impacts on the environment and food security. Ensuring that these subsidies work towards sustainable development has never been more urgent, as demand for food grows and fresh water becomes increasingly scarce.

Some 1.8 billion people will be living in countries that face absolute water scarcity by 2025, and more than half the world will experience conditions of water stress. The agriculture sector, which uses between 70% and 90% of the world's consumed fresh water resources, has an especially important role to play in addressing the problem.

Spain spends an estimated billion Euros a year on irrigation subsidies, according to a special research project last year. Other countries in the northern Mediterranean also provide support to the irrigation sector, but the true scale of the subsidies is often difficult to determine. Governments have chosen to provide financial support for irrigation—**these subsidies offer wide-ranging public benefits, from affordable to food, to regional development for poorer areas**. But under-priced water can also cause harm to environment and is a cost to government which needs to be estimated.

To promote a better understanding of the range of positive economic and social benefits, financial scale and environmental impacts of irrigation subsidies in the Mediterranean region, the International Institute for Sustainable Development's Global Subsidies Initiative (www.globalsubsidies.org) is hosting a seminar to connect journalists from northern Mediterranean countries with water experts from intergovernmental organizations (OECD, United Nations), government and the private sector. Partners for this event are - The Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean (<http://www.gwpmmed.org>) and the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (<http://www.mio-ecsde.org>).



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**Global Water
Partnership
Mediterranean**

Monday, 21 February 2011

9:00 Welcome by the IISD-GSI

Speaker: **Chris Charles** and **Damon Vis-Dunbar**, Global Subsidies Initiative, IISD

9:20 Roundtable introductions

10:00 Irrigation at What Cost? The environmental and economic costs of irrigation subsidy policies (30 min. + Q&As)

Speaker: **Kevin Parris**, Policies and Environment Division, Trade and Agriculture Directorate, OECD

11:00 Break (30 minutes)

11:30 The nature of scale of irrigation subsidies in Spain and Mediterranean region (30 min. + Q&As)

Speaker: **Alberto Garrido**, Director, Centro de Estudios e Investigación para la Gestión de Riesgos Agrarios y Medioambientales, CEIGRAM
Research Centre for the Management of Agricultural and Environmental Risks

12:30 Lunch (1 hour 30 minutes)

14:00 Feeding the future: Policies for water management in the agriculture sector

Speaker: **Mr. José Pascual**, member of Board Directors of FENACORE -Irrigators Community

15:00 Strategies for conservation: How are water savings being used, the modernisation of irrigation systems, and the illegal pumping of ground water (30 min. + Q&As)

Speaker: **Eva Hernandez**, Freshwater program, WWF Spain

16:00 Wrap-up: lessons learned and steps forwards (30 min)

18:30 Dinner