



The Doñana Strawberry and Sustainable Water Management Group



Background

Spain is the second largest producer of strawberries worldwide, and about seventy percent of Spanish strawberries are grown in the Doñana region. Unfortunately, the recent growth of strawberry production in this province has put a great strain on the quantity and quality of water resources in the region, which is home to an iconic protected wetland.

Without action, continued pressure on these water resources will ultimately lead to severe environmental degradation of the Doñana ecosystem as well as to a reduction in the long term availability of strawberries from the region.

At SAI Platform's Water Seminar in Seville in April 2014, this realization led to a decision to start a project involving key stakeholders focusing on urgent work necessary at watershed level to safeguard the sector's long-term interest in sourcing strawberries from Doñana.

The group's activities, goals and stakeholders

This SAI Platform coordinated Doñana Strawberry and Sustainable Water Management Group works on improving water governance, implementing and enforcing laws, and adopting the most sustainable and efficient water management practices possible.

Pilot projects undertaken by individual group members prior to the group's launch have shown that water use for strawberry production in the region can be reduced by as much as 40% without negative impact on yield or quality. These pilot projects need to be scaled up and replicated across the farming region, along with best water management practices.

The Group's **membership** is varied and includes four brands (Danone, Innocent, Coca-Cola, and Unilever), four retailers (Ahold, Coop, Marks and Spencer, and Migros), and WWF Spain. Other key stakeholders and advisors include strawberry processing company SVZ and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention). The group is open to other interested stakeholders, upon request and the group's approval.

The Group **aims** to achieve **specific outcomes at three levels**:

1. **Government:** Work with the National and Regional governing bodies to enforce the necessary framework, regulations and controls to ensure a sustainable rate of groundwater abstraction, the maintenance of good water quality and to ensure compliance with environmental legislation regarding water and soil use.

2. **Industry:** Develop a joint and effective approach to ensure application and enforcement of existing water management, land use, relevant environmental laws and the most sustainable water management practices.
3. **Farmers:** Encourage, and provide support to farmers towards improved agricultural practices that contribute to saving water.

The group's achievements to date

Since its launch in May 2014, the group has performed the following activities:

1. Developed an internal background document explaining the current agronomic and environmental situation in the region, past actions at government, industry and farm level, as well as highlighting gaps and possible future actions.
2. Identified key stakeholders to be involved in planned activities, including especially suppliers to the group's company members.
3. Started to develop a joint strategy targeting government, industry and farm levels.

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