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European Union

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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Adverse climate conditions in several European countries in the hydrological year 2022/2023  
*- Information from the Portuguese delegation, on behalf of the French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish delegations*

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Delegations will find in the [Annex](#) a document on the above subject to be presented by the Portuguese delegation under "Any other business" at the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council on 30 May 2023.

**Adverse climate conditions in several European countries in the hydrological year 2022/2023**

In most of the European Union territory, the weather conditions in recent months have led to especially serious situations in several regions, either by the lack of rainfall, occurrence of heat waves or by severe flooding.

The drought situation in Europe is demonstrated by the Combined Drought Indicator on April 30th 2023, which shows that 21.6% of the European territory is in a Warning situation and 3.2% in an Alert situation (Figure 1 in annex). This situation includes the southern Member States as well as those located in other regions.

It should also be noted that according to the monthly forecast of the European Centre for Medium-Term Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), it is very likely that the weather drought will continue throughout most of the territory, with a possible increase in its intensity.

In Portugal, according to the data recorded under the agro-meteorological and hydrological monitoring for the hydrological year 2022/2023, the drought situation worsened significantly in April 2023 with consequent negative impacts on agricultural activities in more than 40% of the territory (mainland).

For this situation contributed the values of average and maximum temperatures above normal, as well as the record of heat waves that, together with reduced rainfall during the month of March and April resulted in a low water content in the soil, with greater incidence in the south of the country.

As a result of these conditions, we have seen difficulties and great concern, particularly in the cereal and extensive livestock sectors, due to the anticipated consumption of conserved foods associated with the potential drop in fodder production, as well as the generalised increase in the cost of conserved foods (feed).

Spain is facing a shortage of precipitation for a prolonged period which, together with the high temperatures recorded, is compromising the viability of crops and pastures (meteorological drought). Rainfall in the period from 1 October 2022 to 25 April 2023 is 24% below the average rainfall. A situation that adds to the already complicated hydrological year 2021/22, which had rainfall 26% below the average value.

We are also witnessing a situation of hydrological drought in large areas of the national geography that are in a situation of pre-alert, alert, or emergency in terms of water availability.

The impact this situation is having on livestock farming, especially extensive farming, is particularly noteworthy. The almost total absence of pasture in large parts of the country is forcing farmers to feed their animals with compound feedstuffs and to supply them with fodder purchased at very high prices. This has a strong impact on the margins of livestock farms, whose viability, with input prices already very high as a result of the war in Ukraine, is seriously compromised.

Significant declines in production are also expected in the fruit and vegetables sector due to the lack of irrigation allocations, in particular in outdoor vegetables where the area under cultivation has been reduced significantly in the absence of water.

Cereal, leguminous and oilseed production will be limited in almost all the regions.

This situation could lead also to a problem, for the following season, of low availability of seed for sowing in quantity and quality.

In addition, there is uncertainty for the next olive groves and vineyard season.

In France, as of 1 May, 68% of groundwater reserves are still at "moderately low to very low levels", including 20% at very low levels. Only 17% of groundwater reserves have levels above normal and 26 departments are at very likely risk of drought by the end of the summer.

Note that in this last month the combination of the persistence of precipitation values much lower than normal and temperature values well above normal, particularly the maximum temperature, resulted in the occurrence of high values of evapotranspiration and significant values of soil moisture deficit, leading to a significant worsening of the meteorological drought situation.

The heavy drought in Italy (figure 7a) caused water deficit and lack of snowfall, the latter is a non-secondary aspect, given that the mountains also supply water to the river Po basin, which holds, under normal conditions, about half of Italy's water resources. The reduction in the flow of the river is also causing the salt wedge to rise from the Adriatic Sea in the Po delta which, over a long stretch, would make the waters unusable for agricultural needs.

This extremely critical situation, which has produced irreversible damage to the production system due to the prolonged drought, has worsened further in some Italian regions due to intense rainfall concentrated in a very short time, which has caused extensive flooding, with loss of human lives and damage to production and structures that is still unquantifiable, as a large part of the affected area is still flooded.

The extent of the phenomenon is well represented by the National Civil Protection Bulletin (figure 7b), which highlights the effects on the ground of the weather alert of 16 May, with highly critical areas (red alert) due to hydraulic and hydrogeological risk in Emilia-Romagna and of moderate intensity (orange alert) in other Italian regions.

The drought and the flooding of rivers and streams, combined with landslides, are having a strong impact on agriculture, damaging animal farming, vineyards, cereal crops, sugar-beet growing, fruits and vegetable productions as well.

In this difficult context, we consider it is important to propose measures to the Commission to mitigate the losses resulting from this period of drought and flooding and to safeguard the financial situation of farms that are under increased pressure.

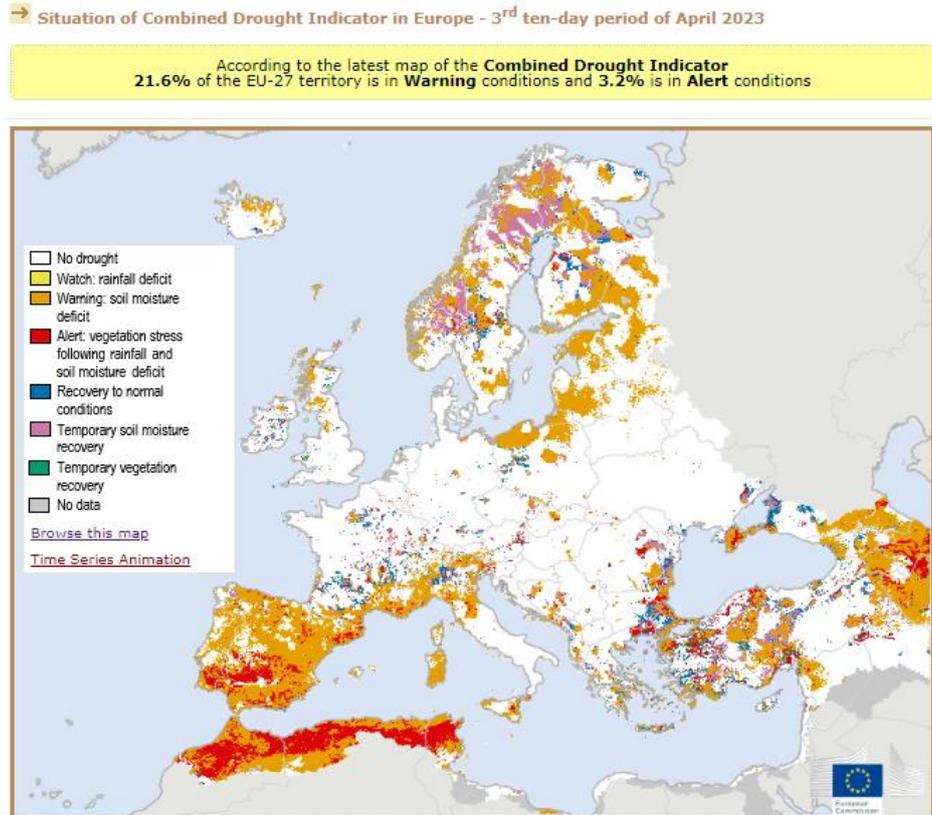
In view of the drought and flooding that has once again struck various Member States, particularly in this first year of implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans, and in order to request the mobilisation of financial resources accordingly, we propose that the use of the agricultural reserve in particular, be considered.

We also call for the greatest attention to be paid to administrative measures, such as derogations and flexibilities, particularly in the context of the implementation of the CAP which may be requested by the various Member States affected, included direct payments as well as the operational programmes of the producer organisations, the wine support program, and the scheme of authorisations for vine plantings.

It is also necessary to increase the level of advance payment rates to at least 70% in the case of direct payments, and to at least 85% for aid granted under rural development. And also, that advances for the single application for 2023 can be paid before on-the-spot checks have been completed.

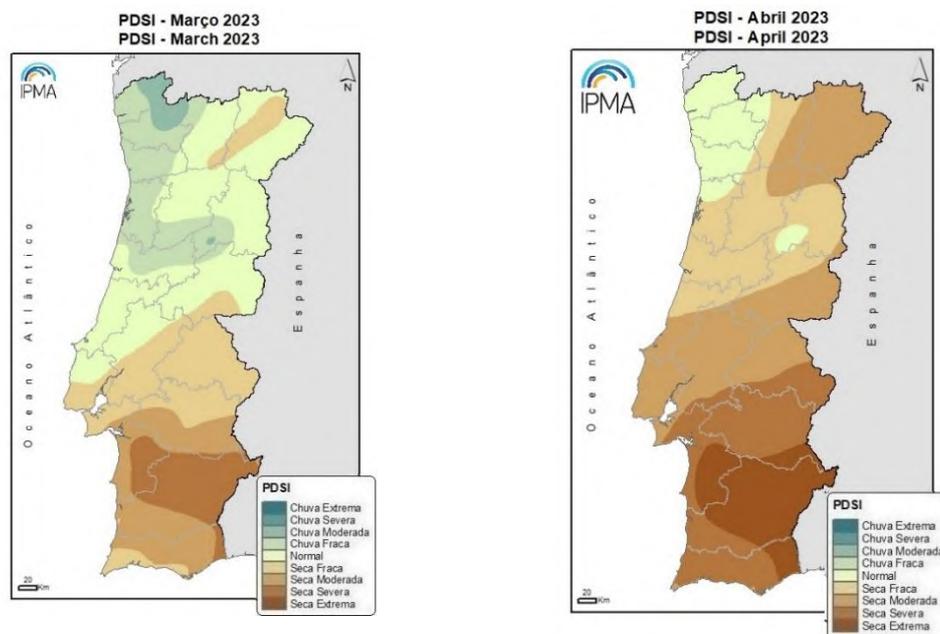
## ANNEX

### Figure 1 - Combined Drought Indicator in the EU (April 30, 2023)



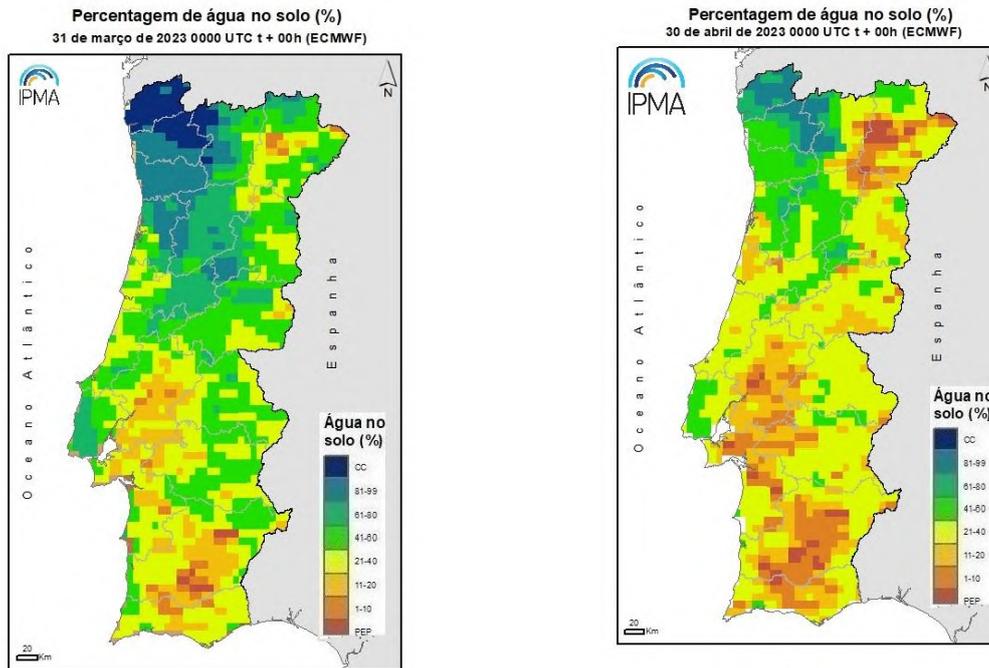
Source: European Drought Observatory (<https://edo.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>)

### Figure 2 - Spatial distribution of the meteorological drought index on March 31 and April 30, 2023



Source: IPMA<sup>1</sup>

Figure 3 - Percentage of water in soil in Portugal



Source: IPMA

**Figure 4 - Standardized Precipitation Index (February to April 2023).**



Source: Agencia Española de Meteorología (AEMET)

<sup>1</sup> IPMA – Portuguese Institute of Sea and Atmosphere

**Figure 5 - Percentage of soil moisture (available water) with respect to the maximum total amount that a soil can retain.**



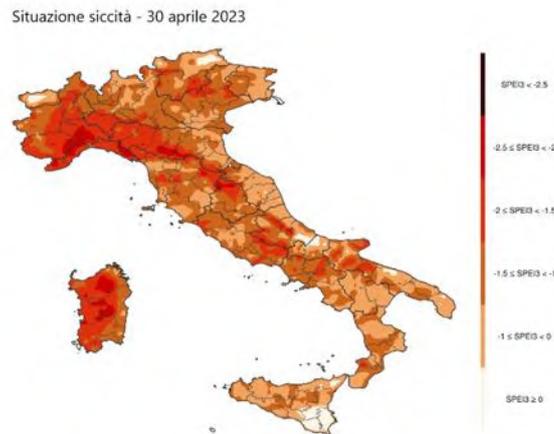
Source: Agencia Española de Meteorología (AEMET)

**Figure 6 – Situation of the water tables in France on 1 May 2023**



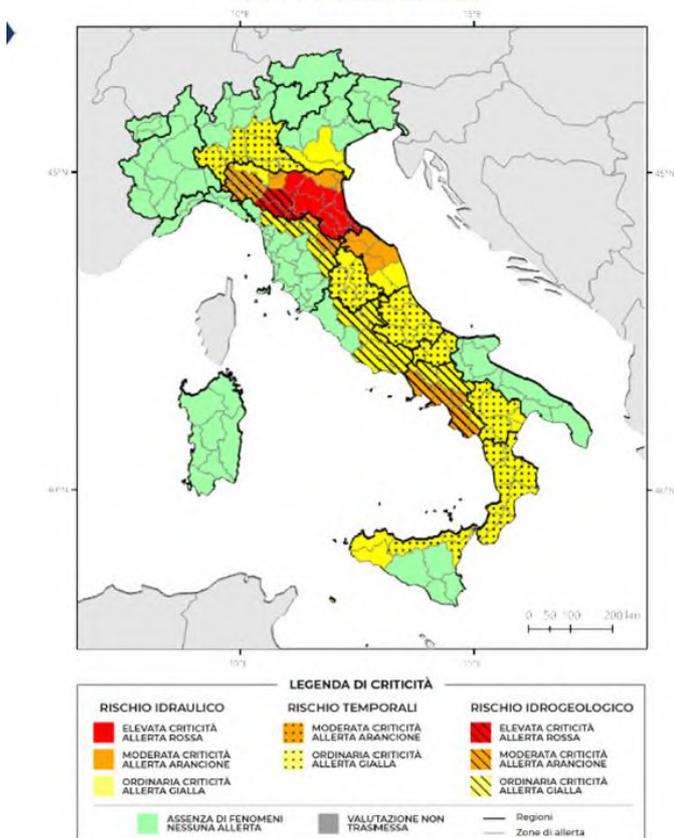
Source: BRGM - Geological and Mining Research Bureau

**Figure 7a**

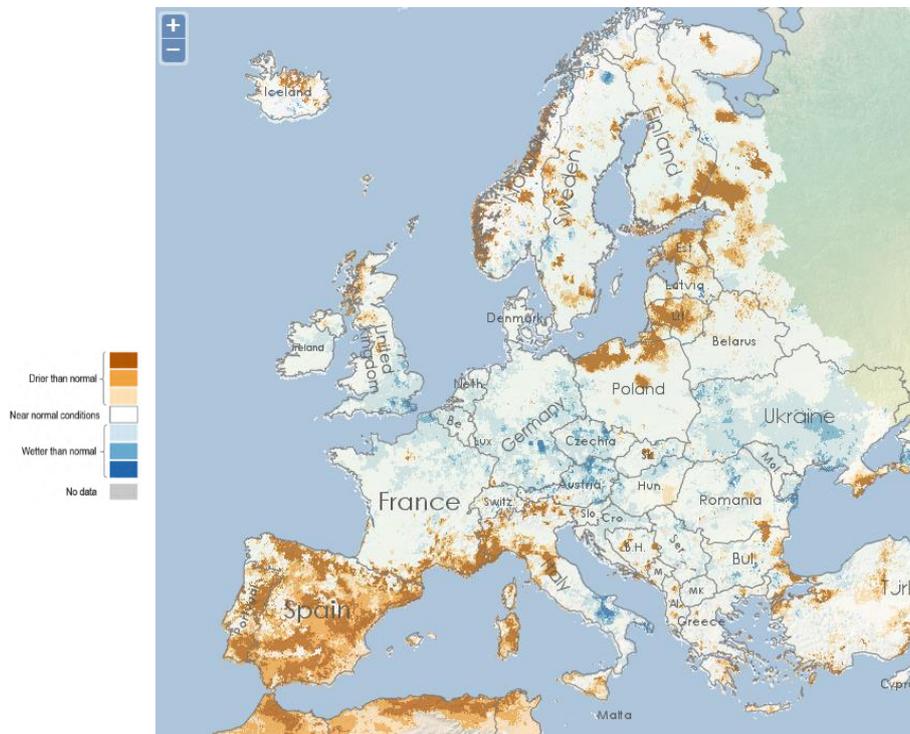


**Figure 7 b**

**BOLLETTINO DI CRITICITA' NAZIONALE - ALLERTA DEL 16/05/2023**  
Effetti al suolo previsti per la giornata di oggi,  
martedì 16 maggio 2023



**Figure 8 - Soil moisture index in the European Territory**



Source: European Drought Observatory