

EU Water Framework Directive

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European Glyphosate Environmental Information Source

Important Notes to users:

This document is part of a toolbox which provides independent information on the sustainable use of glyphosate. It cannot however be definitive and users must ensure that they assess local factors and particularly take account of any national or regional legislative requirements. At the end of the document reference sources used in its preparation and links to other relevant documents are provided.

Summary

This document briefly summarises the main requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive, and its main daughter directives, focusing primarily on the implications for pesticides. However this is a complex piece of legislation with considerable flexibility delegated to Member States in how it is implemented. Users must therefore always check the particular local situation in their country or region.

Detailed information

The so called EU Water Framework Directive or WFD (officially *Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy*) is the most comprehensive and integrated piece of water legislation ever adopted in Europe. It is also one of the most complex. This document briefly summarises the requirements of the WFD focusing primarily on pesticides but it is important to recognise that the WFD also covers a much wider range of issues relating to water pollution and water management, of which pesticides is but one.

Basic WFD objectives

The WFD covers all water across Europe including rivers, lakes above a certain size, groundwater, coastal waters, estuaries and artificial or heavily modified water (e.g. canals) which are to be managed in defined River Basin Districts (RBDs). The Directive sets common objectives for water across Europe, but allows considerable flexibility to member States in how they secure these objectives.

The requirements are complex but in simple terms the Directive requires all water to be classified into different status levels, according to specified criteria, with the primary aim to achieve “good status” in all waters, although the definition of good status varies between surface water and groundwater:

Surface water good status

- Meet good chemical and ecological quality requirements
- Meet defined standards for EU priority substances (further defined in separate Priority Substances Directive)

Groundwater good status

- Meet good chemical quality and quantitative requirements (further defined in separate Groundwater Directive)

There are also some additional requirements, namely

1. That there is no deterioration between status classes- a standstill clause
2. For groundwater to prevent and limit the entry of pollutants and to reverse significant and sustained upward trends in pollution levels
3. The designation of what are known as Protected Areas (PAs) within which even tighter standards might be needed to protect particular uses of that water body. In relation to pesticides the most significant of these PAs are drinking water catchments (article 7) and sensitive habitats/species (Directives 92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC)

Priority Substances Directive (2008/105/EU)

This new daughter directive under article 16 of the WFD came into force in December 2008 and introduced a new framework for dealing with chemical pollution of water from dangerous substances as well as repealing a number of old directives. It identifies a first list of 33 so called "Priority Substances", identified through a process of scientific assessment, for which Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) are to be set at EU level. These EQS values are to replace the existing Annexe 10 of the WFD. A number of these substances are further identified as "Priority Hazardous Substances" for which the aim is "the cessation or phasing-out of discharges, emissions and losses".

The directive also identifies a provisional list of additional substances which are to be the subject of further review to identify whether they should be included as priority substances. This review is to be completed no later than January 2011. Glyphosate is not included in the existing list of priority substances, but along with AMPA (its main metabolite) it is included in the Annexe 3 list of possible new priority substances. The reason given by the European Parliament for this inclusion was that "Glyphosate is a herbicide used in large quantities and which is found in high concentrations in surface water. There is a lack of knowledge on the hazard (danger) of glyphosate. AMPA is the principal metabolite of glyphosate and comes also from industrial sources. There is a lack of data on the hazard (danger) of AMPA."

Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)

This new daughter directive under article 17 of the WFD came into force in 2006. It essentially complements the WFD by setting out measures to prevent and control groundwater pollution, including criteria for assessing good groundwater chemical status, criteria for the identification of significant and sustained upward trends and the definition of starting points for trend reversals. In respect of pesticides it sets EU wide quality standards for groundwater which are to be used as part of the definition of groundwater good chemical status. The standards cover "Active substances in pesticides, including their relevant metabolites, degradation and reaction products (1)" of:

- 0,1 µg/l for individual substance
- 0,5 µg/l (total) (2)

(1) 'Pesticides' means plant protection products and biocidal products as defined in Article 2 of Directive 91/414/EEC and in Article 2 of Directive 98/8/EC, respectively.

(2) 'Total' means the sum of all individual pesticides detected and quantified in the monitoring procedure, including their relevant metabolites, degradation and reaction products.

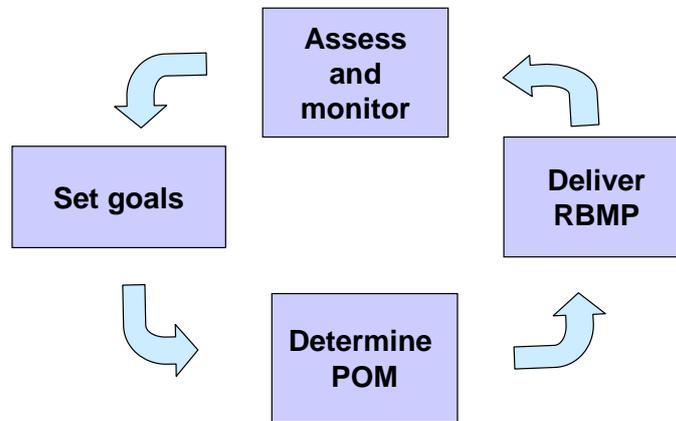
Summary of WFD requirements for pesticides

The overall WFD requirements, specifically in relation to pesticides are summarised in the table below. However precise details must always be checked with the relevant MS and the competent authorities. It should be noted that glyphosate is not included in the list of EU priority substances.

WFD Requirement *		Surface water	Groundwater
Good status		<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Good ecological status○ Meet EU wide PS limits○ Meet Member State EQS values	Average across aquifer not to exceed 0.1 µg/l
Standstill		No deterioration between status classes	
Protect and restore			<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reverse upward trends○ Prevent and limit entry of pollutants
PA s	Drinking water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Under the treatment applied comply with drinking water standard○ Prevent deterioration in order to minimise treatment	
	Habitats & species	Protect designated habitats and species	
Overall compliance assessment		The most stringent criteria applies depending on the requirements of each water body	

Basic WFD approach

The directive essentially requires Member states to carry out a review and improvement cycle, based on (1) assessment of the current status of all water bodies, (2) setting improvement goals, (3) determining a programme of measures designed to secure these goals, (4) building these into a river basin management plan. This is summarised in the diagram below:



POM= programme of measures

RBMP=River Basin Management Plan

This cycle must be repeated for three successive river basin plan periods:

- RBMP 1 from 2009 -2015
- RBMP 2 from 2015- 2021
- RBMP 3 from 2021 – 2027

Importantly each river basin plan must be subject to economic assessment to ensure that the measures adopted are cost effective. Additionally in certain circumstances objectives can be deferred or made less stringent where the necessary measures are technically infeasible or disproportionately expensive.

Reference for further detailed information:

1. EU Water Framework Directive ([Click here](#))
2. EU Groundwater Directive ([Click here](#))
3. EU Priority Substances Directive ([Click here](#))
4. EU WFD information source ([Click here](#))

See also:

- EU Directive on Sustainable Use of Pesticides
- EU Regulation concerning the Placing of Plant Protection Products on the Market
- EU drinking water quality legislation

Document status:

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