

Audit topic:

Water pollution

Water quality and the European Union

Protecting water and ensuring its sustainable quality is a key area of the EU environmental policy. Ensuring access to quality drinking water is also one of the SDGs of the UN's 2030 Agenda. However, water quality is negatively affected by a number of aspects and **one of them is pollution resulting from agricultural activity.**

What are the goals of EU?

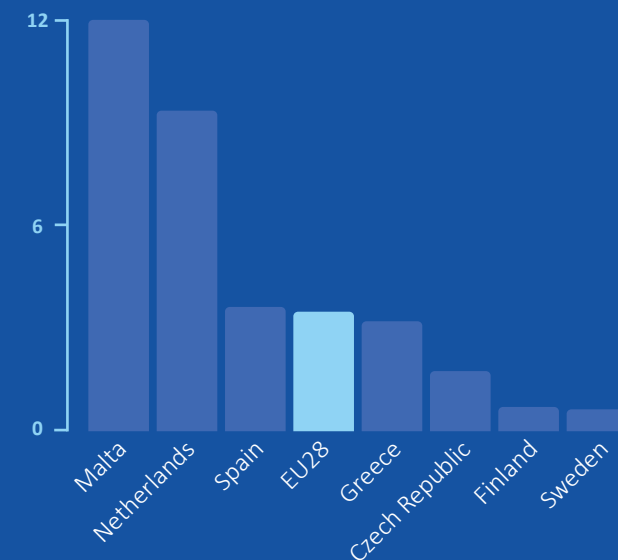
The EU's Seventh Environment Action Programme has set the objective that by 2020 the use of plant protection products should not have any harmful effects on human health or unacceptable influence on the environment. **At the same time, these products should be used in a sustainable way.** The indicator is total sales of pesticides.



The ECA conducts an audit on **"pesticides"**. It aims to assess whether the EU measures in the area of sustainable use of pesticides produce tangible results.

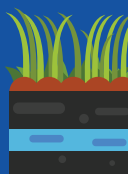


Pesticide consumption in selected EU countries (kg/ha)



Did you know?

In 2019 Slovenia's SAI found that since 2002 the forbidden and health-threatening herbicide Atrazine had **continued to be found in groundwater sources.**



Pesticides applied to crops enter soil **and contaminate surface and groundwater.**



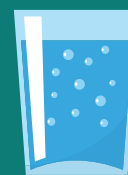
Water and agriculture in the Czech Republic



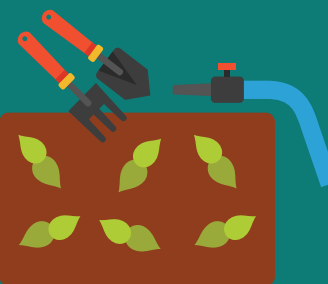
Performance-oriented agriculture: large-scale monoculture crops prevail, repeated cultivation of industrial crops and **use of pesticide amounting to almost 5,000 tonnes per year.**



Drinking water suppliers have limited access to information on use of pesticides and their possible occurrence in water sources.



Most drinking water treatment plants in the Czech Republic require investments of hundreds of millions of euros to complement the third stage of water treatment. However, the solution in the form of the third level of treatment addresses only the consequences of pollution of drinking water sources, but does not address the causes.



Growing industrial crops (especially canola) requires more pesticides than growing of other crops.

Monitoring of water quality indicates alarming results of exceeding pesticide limits in **more than 40% of groundwater sources.**



These are some of the facts just for the Czech Republic. How is it in your country?



What can we do?

The Czech SAO is preparing an audit on Intervention to ensure sustainable water quality. We want to examine whether the set goals are being met and whether the prepared money is distributed efficiently and have concrete impacts.

And what about you? All SAIs can consider to perform audits on this or similar theme and then share their results. We had also prepared basic questions for international comparison, which every SAI can try to answer.

1. What is the share of diffused pollution in the pollution in your country?

According to the OECD, 56% surface and groundwater sources are contaminated by the diffuse source of pollution in the Czech Republic.

2. What is the share of water sources contaminated by pesticides in your country?

In the Czech Republic (2013–2016), pesticides were present in more than half of the groundwater sources.

3. What is the limit of pesticide contamination for raw water taken from surface or groundwater sources, for drinking water treatment and for drinking water in your country?

In the Czech Republic, the limit value for each individual pesticide substance is 0.1 µg/l. The total limit value for all pesticide substances is 0.5 µg/l. These limit values apply to both raw and drinking water.

4. What is the share of agricultural production of industrial crops for 1st generation biofuels in total agricultural production in your country?

In 2018, industrial crops took the second place (26.6%) right after cereals (39.1%) in the Czech Republic's crop production.

5. What is the consumption of pesticide active substances in agricultural production in your country?

In the Czech Republic, the consumption of plant protection products in 2017 was almost 4,700 tonnes, which was almost 112 tonnes less than in 2016.

6. Is there a rule in your country for SAPS (Single Area Payment System) or SPS (Single Payment Scheme) favouring farmers who use low risk pesticides?

In the Czech Republic's national subsidies, neither SAPS or any other payments allow favouring farmers who use low risk pesticides.

Let's do this together. With data, information and answers from all of us, we can bring unique results with positive impact on the topic. Are you in?

"Any idea to the topic?
Contact us at biep@nku.cz!"

