



The Marseille Call

Building a political and scientific voice for the hydro-agricultural transition

Agriculture is currently the world's largest user of water resources, accounting for nearly 71% of global freshwater withdrawals (Aquastat, 2025). Yet, it remains insufficiently represented in major international water dialogue and decision-making fora, where agricultural policies, food production challenges, and the realities of rural territories are often marginal to the discussions.

In a context marked by accelerating climate change, the growing frequency and intensity of water and food crises, and the urgent need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the objectives set under the three Conferences of the Parties (COPs), strengthening the voice of the agricultural sector in international water arenas has become essential.

The 26th World Congress of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) will take place in Marseille from 12 to 17 October 2026. It represents a strategic opportunity to structure concrete contributions to be advanced within major international dialogue processes, notably during the 2026 United Nations Water Conference, the 11th World Water Forum in 2027, as well as the Conferences of the Parties on climate change and to combat desertification.

The ICID World Congress is a **major platform for international scientific dialogue** on the interlinkages between water, agriculture, and climate. More than 350 scientific contributions from around fifty countries have been submitted, and over 1,000 participants are expected in Marseille.

The Congress therefore offers a unique opportunity to strengthen the connections between research, public policies, and operational action, to better integrate agricultural issues into these international discussions on water, climate, and the environment.

Overall Objective of the Marseille Call

The Marseille Call aims to mobilize Ministries of Agriculture and their partners to take an active and visible role in international water discussions, engage in cross-sectoral dialogue, and **co-develop practical solutions to accelerate the transition of agricultural systems toward water-efficient, climate-resilient and food-secure pathways.**

The Call seeks to position agriculture not as a sector competing with other water uses, but as a key actor in the water transition, capable of **contributing simultaneously to food security, climate resilience, and the preservation of water resources.**

Positioning of the Marseille Call

The Marseille Call is built around a central premise: **the transition of agricultural systems is a prerequisite for achieving water, food, and climate security, at both global and territorial levels.**

It recognizes that the transition of agricultural systems and the sustainable management of water resources must be addressed jointly to respond effectively to environmental, climate, and food challenges. In a context of increasing water scarcity, heightened hydro-climatic variability, and growing

competition among water uses, **agriculture lies at the heart of these interdependencies. It is both a vulnerable sector and a key lever for the water transition.**

These transitions do not rely on one-size-fits-all solutions, but rather on a combination of technical, agronomic, organizational, economic, and institutional responses, built through cross-sectoral dialogue. Research plays a structuring role by generating context-specific knowledge, assessing possible pathways, and supporting the co-creation of solutions tailored to territorial realities.

Against this backdrop, the **Marseille Call seeks to mobilize stakeholders from the agricultural sector to engage in international arenas with operational proposals**, rooted in concrete experiences of agricultural transformation. It draws on contributions from academic, institutional, and professional actors to formulate a limited set of key messages and priority actions, designed to inform international processes.

Drafting process of the Marseille Call

The Marseille Call will be developed progressively through the scientific and technical contributions presented during the Congress, the priorities identified by the 44 ICID National Committees, and the recommendations put forward by the institutional partners involved in the organisation of the Congress.

Discussions will focus on financing the hydro-agricultural transition, as well as identifying solutions to strengthen the resilience of agricultural systems to hydro-climatic challenges, in line with the three core questions of the Congress:

- How can irrigation and drainage contribute to the agroecological transition in the face of climate change?
- How can technological innovations support more efficient and sustainable agricultural water use?
- What role can non-conventional water resources play in strengthening water security for territories and agricultural systems?

A consolidated version of the Marseille Call will be shared and discussed with participating countries and partners ahead of the Congress and further refined during the high-level segment organised in Marseille.

Structure of the High-Level Segments

Monday, 12 October – Political Dialogue

The *opening ceremony* will bring together ministers, international organisations, and financial institutions to introduce the key challenges at the intersection of water, agriculture, and climate, and to position agriculture as a central actor in the water transition.

A high-level roundtable on financing the hydro-agricultural transition will explore innovative financing mechanisms and strategies to mobilise public and private investment, with the participation of the World Bank, Agence Française de Développement, International Fund for Agricultural Development, and Crédit Agricole.

A closed ministerial dialogue, building on the preparatory consultations, will provide participating delegations with the opportunity to share their national perspectives and work towards a common set of operational recommendations.

Wednesday, 14 October – Scientific Diplomacy

The closing session will be dedicated to the role of the scientific community. The session will aim to:

- Present a synthesis of the scientific and technical discussions held during the Congress around its three core questions;
- Discuss the operational implications of the messages emerging from the Marseille Call;
- Identify contributions, commitments, and areas for cooperation that research institutions, universities, and international scientific networks could advance in view of upcoming international milestones, notably the 2026 United Nations Water Conference and the 11th World Water Forum in 2027.

This process will notably involve representatives from international agricultural research centres, universities, and leading French and international research institutions.

Organizers and governance

The 26th World Congress is organized by Eau, Agriculture et Territoires (EAT), the French National Committee of the ICID.

The scientific and technical preparation of the Congress is overseen by an international committee (ITAC). ITAC brings together representatives from ICID, EAT, IWMI, FAO, World Bank, IFAD, World Water Council, ICRISAT, GWP, IWRA and ADB. This committee is responsible for ensuring the scientific rigor, thematic coherence, and overall credibility of the Congress's work.

This dynamic is further strengthened by the contribution of leading research organisations and academic institutions, whose role is essential in generating knowledge, supporting innovation, informing public policies, and co-developing scientifically grounded solutions adapted to territorial realities, including INRAE, IRD, CIRAD, CGIAR, ICARDA, and Aix-Marseille Université.

The event is held under the high patronage of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty of France.

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