

The Congress Call



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. This shared assessment lies at the heart of the ministerial declaration adopted at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA), held in Berlin in January 2026.

The 26th World Congress of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), to be held in Marseille from 12 to 17 October 2026, represents a strategic window of opportunity to build on this momentum. It aims to structure concrete and operational contributions to be carried forward into key international dialogue spaces, notably the United Nations Water Conference in 2026, the 11th World Water Forum in 2027, as well as within the frameworks of the Conferences of the Parties on climate change and to combat desertification.

Ministries of Agriculture have a central role to play in ensuring that agricultural policies are more effectively reflected in these international dialogues, working in close coordination with ministries responsible for water, the environment, and climate action.

Overall Objective of the Congress Call

The Congress 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 Congress Call

The Congress 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 and supporting the co-creation of innovations and solutions tailored to territorial realities.

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

These messages will emerge from a structured process of capitalization and consultation, bringing together scientific and technical contributions from the Congress, inputs from the 44 National Committees of the ICID, as well as initiatives led by representatives of a high-level panel on financing the hydro-agricultural transition.

A draft of the Congress Call will be progressively developed on this basis and shared with participating countries ahead of the Congress to gather comments and facilitate convergence. Dedicated exchanges will be organized upstream to refine the document and build a shared understanding of its key messages.

The high-level segment in Marseille will provide an opportunity for Ministers to consolidate these discussions, share national perspectives, and converge towards a common set of actionable recommendations.

1. Solutions to optimize access to and use of water for a more hydro-climate-resilient agriculture:

- Optimizing water use through technological innovation, including precision irrigation, digital tools, irrigation scheduling and control, and improvements in water-use efficiency.
- Securing water resources through the mobilization of non-conventional water resources, such as the reuse of treated wastewater, brackish water, drainage water, and desalination.
- Enhancing the hydrological and ecological functions through nature-based solutions and agroecological approaches, including living soils, integrated watershed management, and adaptation of cropping systems.

2. Financing the hydro-agricultural transition:

- Aligning and leveraging public and private financing.
- Facilitating access to climate and biodiversity finance.
- Reforming economic incentives, including water pricing mechanisms, targeted subsidies, and innovative financial instruments.
- Funding continuity across research, development, and scaling-up phases.

Structure of the High-Level Political Segment (12 October 2026)

The high-level segment will be structured around three complementary moments:

1. Opening Session – Setting the scene: A high-level opening bringing together Ministers and international leaders to frame the key challenges at the intersection of water, agriculture and climate, and to position agriculture as a central actor of the water transition.

2. High-Level Roundtable – Financing the hydro-agricultural transition: A dedicated discussion focusing on innovative financing mechanisms, mobilization of public and private investments, and alignment of financial flows to support water-resilient agricultural systems.

3. Closed Ministerial Session – Consolidating the Congress Call: A closed-door ministerial dialogue building on preparatory consultations conducted upstream. This session will provide an opportunity to share national perspectives, refine the main orientations of the Congress Call, and consolidate a common set of actionable recommendations.

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**26th ICID
INTERNATIONAL
CONGRESS**
77th IEC MEETING

MARSEILLE - FRANCE | 12 - 17 OCT. 2024

WATER, SOIL, CLIMATE
SHAPING RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

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Organizers and governance

The 26th World Congress is organized by Eau, Agriculture et Territoires (EAT), the French National Committee of the ICID, an international non-governmental organization with consultative status within the United Nations system.

The scientific and technical preparation of the Congress is overseen by an international body, the International Technical Advisory 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.

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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