



Taskforce on Nature-related  
Financial Disclosures

## Red Gold: Spanish Strawberries and German Supermarkets

Risks materialising from nature-  
related dependencies across  
international supply chains

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

Supermarkets around the world seek to meet the needs of increasingly sophisticated and demanding customers, including for year-round access to fresh fruit and vegetables that might be out of season in the local or national context. Consequently, the business models and value chains of agri-food companies depend on ecosystem services, such as pollination services from insects and water provision around the world, with additional concerns about the carbon footprint of fresh produce transported by air.

A good example of this is demand for out-of-season strawberries in Northern Europe. German and Swiss supermarkets, for example, source primarily from southern Spain where the growing season begins earlier. Out of season demand has, however, pushed Spanish strawberry farmers to embrace ever more intensive farming practices for longer periods of the year, including the use of illegal wells for irrigation. These practices have strained local ecosystems and their ability to provide those ecosystem services into farming operations, resulted in severe environmental degradation and ultimately reduced the produced yield of strawberries. These regions now face the increasingly difficult double challenge of managing the long-term resilience of water resources while sustaining the resilience of strawberry production and valuable local employment and export earnings.

One of the major strawberry production areas in Europe is Huelva Province, a part of the broader region of Andalusia in southern Spain. The favourable climate conditions in the region make these among the first berries available in the European market and the largest source of global berry exports. Huelva accounted for 98% of Spain's total strawberry production of over 326,000 tonnes in the 2023/2024 season.

This strawberry production area in Huelva is also adjacent to the Doñana National Park, one of Europe's most important wetlands and a biodiversity hotspot. The increasing depletion of water resources, not least from berry production, threatens the exceptional biodiversity of the area. Several national and international organisations, including WWF, have raised concern for decades about the threats of expanding commercial berry production that put the Doñana National Park at risk.

In 2023, German non-governmental organisation Campact launched a campaign urging German supermarkets including Edeka, Lidl, Rewe and Aldi, as well as consumers, to boycott Spanish strawberries due to their harmful environmental impacts. The campaign aimed to halt further water extraction and encourage better water management in the region.

This case study explores the impacts of the boycott on German and Swiss supermarkets and their efforts to address the nature-related risks in their supply chains, particularly those linked to water dependencies. It is an example of how unidentified and/or poorly managed nature-related dependencies and impacts can create risks to an organisation, in this case reputational and financial risks.



## 1.2. Understanding the dependency pathway for strawberry production

### Box 1: Dependency pathway

A dependency pathway describes how a particular business activity depends upon ecosystem services and specific features of natural capital (stocks of environmental assets). It identifies how observed or potential changes in natural capital (caused by specific business activities and external factors) affect the costs and/or benefits of doing business.

An international supermarket chain has a dependency on the ecosystem service of water provision, both ground water and surface water, at its suppliers' strawberry farms. Nature's ability to continue to provide that flow of water is affected by human-induced land-use change and a range of other factors, including climate change. In short, today's impact on nature by the organisation and its value chain can amplify tomorrow's dependencies on nature for the organisation and its value chain.

The related dependency pathway leading to a change in value for the organisation includes:

**Impact drivers:** Water use as well as freshwater and land use change through intensive farming practices, including volume of groundwater and surface water consumed.

**External factors:** Some neighbouring farmers extract water from illegal wells in order to expand their fields. Climate change is also increasing the frequency of droughts.

**Change in the state of nature:** The impact drivers and external factors reduce the quantity of water in the ecosystem that supports strawberry production as well as the unique biodiversity in a nearby, strictly protected natural reserve.

**Value of dependencies:** Changes in the provision of water affect both the upstream farming operation and the downstream supermarket business through their shared dependency on this ecosystem service, resulting in rising costs to all organisations across the value chain and potentially reduced revenues from lower yields of strawberries (both produced by the farm and available for sale through the supermarket). The supermarket chain faces increased costs of supporting restoration efforts in the region and/or finding additional/alternative sources of supply as well as managing reputational risks.



## 2. Location: Huelva province in Andalusia, Spain

Spain is among the top 10 biggest strawberry producers in the world and the largest EU strawberry producer in the European Union (EU), representing 30% of total EU strawberry production. The main Spanish region for red fruit production is Huelva in the western part of the region of Andalusia, in southern Spain.

Huelva represents 98% of strawberry production in Spain and 30% of the European Union, according to data by the Spanish Federation of Associations of Producers and Exporters of Fruit, Vegetables, Flowers and Living Plants (FEPEX)<sup>1</sup>. Providing 110,00 direct jobs and 160,00 indirect jobs, the strawberry and red fruit sector supports and drives Andalusia's social and economic development, contributing 11.35% of the province's GDP.

The region is important for international companies and retailers, such as German and Swiss supermarkets, which preferentially source strawberries from southern Spain because of its extended growing season.

According to data by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Spain is a net exporter of red fruits, with a positive balance of EUR 229 million in the 2023/2024 season<sup>2</sup>. The main destination countries include Germany, France, the Netherlands and the UK. Besides strawberries, Spain exports other red fruits such as raspberries, blackberries and blueberries. The region has a unique climate for growing berries, which makes it the first European strawberry to appear on the market during winter.

This region is also one of particular nature significance for Spain and for Europe. Until the mid-20th century, the wetlands in Andalusia had barely been affected by human activity aside from hunting and cattle breeding. In the middle of the last century, several initiatives were taken to drain the area and develop agriculture and forestry. The wetland was substantially transformed when the water flows were diverted to reach the sea more quickly. The drying of the wetlands made cultivation possible.

The growth in European demand for strawberries and other red fruits from southern Spain has come at an environmental cost, notably the impact on the Doñana wetland area. Those impacts have increased the corresponding dependencies and risks across the value chain to end consumers across Europe. The region faces a 'double bind' of protecting its water resources while sustaining strawberry production and local jobs. International and local NGOs have long called for a more sustainable and efficient water management approach as well as better water governance in implementing and enforcing laws.

<sup>1</sup> FEPEX. "Campaign to Promote Spanish Strawberries." *FEPEX*  
<https://www.fepex.es/noticias/detalle/FEPEX-pide-Agricultura-apoyo-frente-campana-compra-fresas-alemania>.

<sup>2</sup> chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/agricultura/temas/producciones-agricolas/analisisfrutosrojoscampana2023\_2423deabril2024\_tcm30-680918.pdf



### Box 3 - Wetlands

Wetlands are one of the most biodiverse and endangered ecosystems on Earth. They provide a wide range of ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and flood reduction and are often home to rare or endangered species. However, most of the Earth's wetlands have been lost due to land use change, climate change and invasive species. With 35% loss globally since 1970, wetlands are our most threatened ecosystem, disappearing three times faster than forests.

In 1963, the Spanish government, in collaboration with WWF, acquired 7,000 hectares of land for the creation of the Doñana Biological Reserve and the Doñana Biological Station<sup>3</sup>, a research institute dedicated to the study of terrestrial ecology, a year later. Based on that, a National Park was created in 1969, located within this area where the Guadalquivir River flows into the Atlantic, which was expanded again in 1978 and 2004.

The Doñana receives water from several surface sources, primarily the Guadalquivir estuary, as well as from a large aquifer groundwater system and is considered one of the most important wetlands in Europe. The Park's rich diversity of ecosystems and landscapes is a result of the interaction between the ocean and the river. It holds a natural, protected network of over 3,000 Mediterranean temporary ponds fed by groundwater, relying on the annual fluctuations of the aquifer five times larger than the national park.

With an area of over 54,000 ha, the Park is home to an abundance of flora and fauna. Doñana is of international importance due to the numerous species of breeding, wintering and migrating birds that find a place of rest that cannot be replaced. The reserve is also a habitat for several endangered species, including Imperial eagles, Iberian lynxes and Spur-thighed tortoises. Reflecting its importance and in addition to its status as a National Park, Doñana is also a declared RAMSAR Wetland<sup>4</sup>, Biosphere Reserve, UNESCO World Heritage Site<sup>5</sup> and Natura 2000 Protected Area<sup>6</sup> (Special Conservation Zone and Special Protection Zone for Birds).

### Box 2 - State of Nature

The TNFD defines the state of nature as the condition and extent of ecosystems and species' population size and extinction risk, including positive or negative changes.

The observable impacts on the Doñana from unsustainable human activities in its surrounding areas, including strawberry production in Huelva, highlights the impact on nature from agribusiness and other commercial activities in the region and their increasingly fragile dependencies on those ecosystem

<sup>3</sup> Doñana Biological Station (EBD-CSIC)  
<https://www.ebd.csic.es/en>

<sup>4</sup> RAMSAR  
<https://rsis.ramsar.org/ris/234>

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO. "Doñana National Park." UNESCO World Heritage Centre  
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/685>.

<sup>6</sup> Natura 2000  
[https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/?views=Sites\\_View](https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/?views=Sites_View)



services. Intensive agriculture based on extraction from the aquifer and increasing tourism continues to have a serious impact on groundwater and surface water. Over the summer months, ponds that were once permanent frequently disappear.

The impact of climate change has further escalated stress on the wetland with more frequent heat waves, less and more irregular rainfalls, heavier runoff and less water retention in the soil. Moreover, greater water consumption from the surrounding towns and for irrigation have been compounded by higher levels of evapotranspiration due to higher average temperatures and saline intrusion caused by rising sea levels.<sup>7</sup>

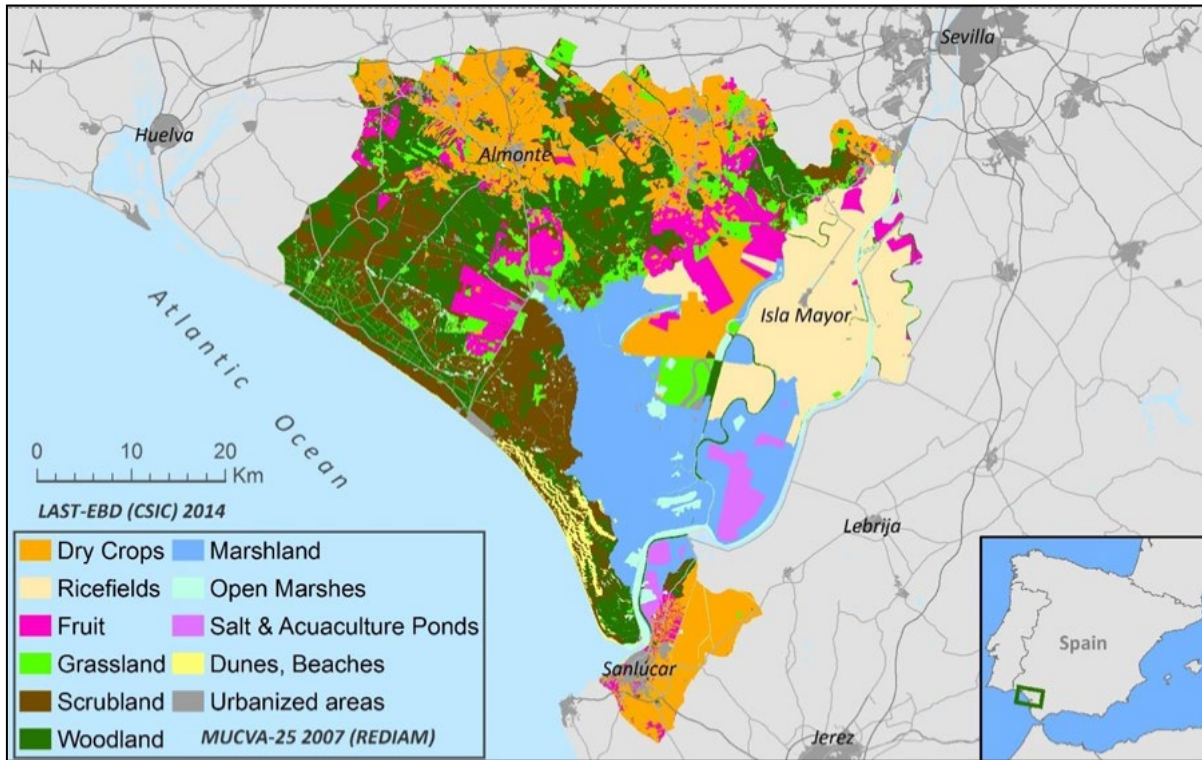
Although Doñana has been strictly protected since 1969, its surroundings have undergone significant land-use changes in recent decades. Competition for water has intensified since the 1980s due to its increased use for agricultural purposes and tourism. These include greenhouse farming, mostly for red berries, which began in the early 1990s and the use of groundwater sources for a tourist resort beside the national park as well as in several hotels and holiday homes. This has led to significant declines in groundwater supply in the area. The World Heritage Committee has regularly warned of the overexploitation of the aquifer and its potential impacts on the site.

A scientific paper published in the ScienceDirect website in 2023<sup>8</sup> shows that 59.2% of the Doñana pond network was lost between 1985 and 2018, primarily because of human activities. The so-called Mediterranean Temporary Ponds are global biodiversity hotspots and priority habitats, according to the Natura 2000 network. The disappeared pond area has been colonised by terrestrial vegetation, affecting the original fauna and flora, in particular amphibians, reptiles, odonates and aquatic plants. Ecosystems protected under the EU Habitats Directive, such as heathlands or dunes, have seen their conservation status degrade significantly as they can only thrive if the aquifer is in good condition.

Doñana spans a number of biomes, including rivers and streams, lakes, artificial wetlands, marine shelf, subterranean cave and rock systems, shrublands and shrubby woodlands, intensive land-use, coastal inlets and lagoons, brackish and tidal systems, shoreline, maritime vegetation and artificial shorelines.

<sup>7</sup> Evapotranspiration refers to the combined processes which move water from the Earth's surface into the atmosphere.

<sup>8</sup> "Thirty-four Years of Landsat Monitoring Reveal Long-Term Effects of Groundwater Abstractions on a World Heritage Site Wetland." Science of the Total Environment. Accessed December 3, 2024. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969723019484>.



**Source:** Green, AJ, Bustamante, J., Janss, GFE, Fernández-Zamudio, R., Díaz-Paniagua, C. (2016). Doñana Wetlands (Spain). In: Finlayson, C., Milton, G., Prentice, R., Davidson, N. (eds) The Wetland Book. Springer, Dordrecht. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6173-5\\_139-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6173-5_139-1)

This case serves as a clear example of the cumulative impacts on nature over the growing intensification of land use and associated demands for water resources. As business activity in the surrounding area increases, so too do the impacts on the wetland and, consequently, the dependencies of business on the wetland's ability to continue to provision the quantities of water needed to sustain current and anticipated future commercial activities.





### 3. Growing concerns

Recognising the growing pressure on the Doñana caused by the growing intensification of land use and its implications for water demand, the regional Government of Andalusia approved a “Special Management Plan for the irrigated areas located north of the Doñana Forest Crown” (the “Special Plan”) in 2014 to address irrigation management in the area. The purpose of the Special Plan was to reconcile the needs of the agriculture and tourism sectors with the protection of the natural values of Doñana and the rational use of water.

Despite the water management plan introduced in 2014 over a thousand illegal wells are still being used to irrigate strawberries and other berries in unapproved areas. In June 2021, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that the ongoing "excessive extraction of groundwater" in the Doñana Natural Area violates EU law and more specifically the Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive.

At the root of the excessive extraction are the thousands of hectares of strawberries and other red berries crops that are being illegally farmed. In January 2022, the People’s Party of Andalusia put forward a legislative proposal to the Regional Parliament of Andalusia to unilaterally amend the main measures of the 2014 Special Plan in consensus with all key stakeholders active in Doñana. The regional government planned to provide an amnesty for 1,900 hectares of strawberry farms, which were illegally pumping groundwater from the aquifer.

The European Commission, international organisations such as UNESCO, Ramsar and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), scientists, environmental groups and the Spanish government opposed these plans. WWF wrote a letter to Virginijus Sinkevičius, EU Commissioner for the Environment, to raise the alarm on the threat that puts the Doñana National Park at risk and call on the European Commission to ensure that Doñana is protected as required by EU law:

*“If passed, this proposed law will effectively provide amnesty and legalize an area of 1,460 hectares of illegal crops under plastic in the surroundings of Doñana. This amounts up to a staggering 85% of the area that currently illegally occupies Doñana and plunders its aquifer. The law would aggravate illegal water abstraction and illegal land use and will damage the natural value and ecosystem services of this unique wetland in Europe.”*

Quote from WWF letter



Another letter to the Regional Government of Andalusia by WWF Spain was co-signed by a group of European agri-food companies that source strawberries and other red berries from Doñana and Huelva to request compliance with the Special Plan:

*“Sustainability is a significant issue for consumers and businesses. It is important that all companies along the entire supply chain work together to avoid potential environmental problems. In doing so, they also rely on competent authorities to ensure responsible water and soil management, including at river basin level. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the sustainability of water and soil management in Doñana in the long term. Should this not succeed, we believe that the reputation and the long-term development of the region as a supply area are at risk.”*

Quote from WWF Spain letter

European companies that signed the WWF Spain-initiated letter included Aldi Nord, Aldi Süd, ASDA, Axfood, Coop Schweiz, Denner, EDEKA, Innocent Drinks, Kaufland, Lidl, Migros, Morrisons, Netto Marken-Discount, Orkla Foods Sverige, Rewe Group, Sainsbury’s, SPAR (CH), SVZ, Tesco, Valora, Volg, Waitrose and Worldwide Fruit.



## 4. The implications for and response from supermarket retailers

The increasingly apparent impacts on the Doñana wetland and the growing fragility of dependencies across the strawberry value chain burst into public view in 2023 when the German non-governmental organisation Campact<sup>9</sup> called on German supermarkets, such as Edeka, Lidl, Rewe and Aldi, and consumers to boycott Spanish strawberries because of their environmental impact. More than 270,000 people signed a joint appeal by Campact and consumer organisation Foodwatch. The campaign was aimed at preventing further water extraction and providing an impetus for well-planned water management in the region.

### The Edeka Group

The Edeka Group is the leader in the German food retail market, with a 25.3% share in 2023 followed by the Rewe Group and Schwarz Group, Statista data shows. Rewe operates a chain of supermarkets around Germany of the same name, while the Schwarz Group is behind such well-known names as Lidl, a discount supermarket and Kaufland, a discount hypermarket.

In November 2023, Spain's Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO)<sup>10</sup> presented "The Framework of Actions for Doñana to reverse its environmental degradation and restore its ecological functioning." The Government of Andalusia withdrew its controversial parliamentary initiative to legalise illegal irrigation while both the regional and national government committed to a joint investment of more than EUR 1.4 billion in actions for the sustainable development of the Doñana area. The MITECO framework includes a range of short- and medium-term measures in water resource management, conservation and restoration of biodiversity, coastal management of the maritime-terrestrial public domain, socio-environmental recovery of the territory and improvement of knowledge.

The consequences of the dependencies of the strawberry value chain on the increasingly stressed water resources of the Doñana wetland were clearly evident in the outcomes of the 2023/2024 berry season for the province of Huelva. Freshuelva, the Association of Producers and Exporters of Strawberries of Huelva, reported that 221,412 tons of strawberries were produced during the 2023-2024 harvest, a 9% drop compared to the previous season. There was an initial phase of irrigation restrictions due to a persistent drought that impacted the development of the strawberry plants, resulting in a slight increase in prices over last season. While the harvest was completed in March, subsequent heat in May reduced the volume of strawberries available for export to downstream customers.

<sup>9</sup> Campact  
<https://www.campact.de/presse/mitteilung/20230530-pm-keine-duerre-erdbeeren-aus-spanien/>

<sup>10</sup> Spanish Government. "Marco de Actuaciones en Doñana." Ministry for Ecological Transition.  
<https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/marco-actuaciones-donana.html>



While there is no publicly available data highlighting how the boycott affected German supermarkets' sales volumes of strawberries, it is clear that this created reputational risk for both growers and supermarket chains and raised awareness among all stakeholders, including companies, buyers and consumers, potentially creating a structural shift in consumer purchasing preferences for the long term. It also highlighted for the retailers that they have a commercial interest and influence in the areas from which they source. There is now evidence that they have started to demand more standards and certifications and explore ways to engage with suppliers on the ground more proactively.

Responding to the reputational risks, some retailers are implementing additional measures, such as legality audits. Almost all of them require "GlobalG.A.P. SPRING"<sup>11</sup> as a basic requirement for produce from that region. GLOBALG.A.P. is a brand of smart farm assurance solutions for the certification of agriculture, aquaculture and floriculture, advancing safer and more responsible farming practices in over 135 countries worldwide. The Sustainable Program for Irrigation and Groundwater Use (SPRING) is an add-on that addresses responsible water management at farm level.

Several retailers are looking into collective action initiatives, such as the Alliance for Water Stewardship Impact Accelerator in Huelva and WRAP's Courtauld 2030 Water Roadmap collective action project in Spain. Most big retailers are now feeling compelled to invest in at least one of these initiatives.

The Swiss retail sector responded more assertively than those in Germany. They announced plans to look at alternative suppliers from the Balkans and Morocco, highlighting the risk to Spanish producers of not sustainably managing their interface with nature. While Spanish producers may lose market share and competitive advantage, some have argued that Swiss retailers might gain a competitive advantage by establishing new sourcing hubs ahead of their larger German counterparts.

Nevertheless, any decision to move to Morocco, where water stress has been elevated in recent years, might make things worse. An alternative strategy for supermarket retailers is to invest upstream in their existing supply chains in Spain, alongside local growers and other stakeholders, to improve the water efficiency of production and reduce the impacts and correspondingly their dependencies, on nature in the Doñana watershed.

Currently, only a handful of big retailers in Europe make investments in the region. They all have shared risks since they often jointly source from the region and sometimes from the same suppliers. While unilateral/bilateral pilot projects are delivering outcomes, they are typically too small to bend the curve on the scale of impacts across the catchment

<sup>11</sup> Sustainable Program for Irrigation and Groundwater Use  
<https://www.globalgap.org/what-we-offer/solutions/spring/>



## 5. Conclusion

It is clear from this example that global agri-food companies face a complex array of nature-related dependencies through their supply chains that can materialise into risks to their organisation; in this case:

- Physical risks – from the declining volume and quality of strawberries available from the Huelva region as the impacts of water stress and climate change impacted yields from the crop in 2023/24.
- Transition risks – from shifting consumer expectations, in this case among German customers precipitated by the boycott action brought against major supermarket chains. This led to reputational risk for supermarket retailers and financial consequences associated with lost sales as customers shopped elsewhere. Companies along the value chain – from growers to retailers – also had to contend with changing policy and regulatory arrangements, from water restrictions during the drought conditions as well as the changes in policy.

### Box 4 – Dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities (DIRO)

An organisation's nature-related risks and opportunities arise from dependencies and impacts on nature.

Analysis of dependencies and impacts is therefore an essential first step to understanding the risks and opportunities the organisation faces.

The objective of the "Evaluate" phase of a LEAP assessment is to develop an understanding of the organisation's potentially material dependencies and impacts on nature.

While supermarkets were aware of the issues and had engaged before the consumer boycott was launched, this case study highlights the need to proactively manage impacts, dependencies and risks through value chains back to their source.



## 6. Annex 1

These are the publicly-available statements of four supermarkets from a Swiss Radio and Television (SRF) article “Strawberries from Spain – to buy or not?” published on 30.04.2024.

### 6.1. REWE

For berries from Spain, the REWE Group requires from 2023 GlobalG.A.P. SPRING certification for the sales lines REWE and PENNY in Germany. The standard promotes sustainable water use in farming.

The IFA standard GLOBALG.A.P. for “Good Agricultural Practices” addresses the fields of plants (incl. fruits and vegetables), livestock and aquaculture. As an internationally recognised standard, it sets criteria for compliance with legal regulations, food safety, occupational health and safety, animal welfare, environmental protection and ecological responsibility.

The company is also reviewing whether water standards will also be required in future for further fruit and vegetable products from water risk regions, in order to contribute to the minimisation of water risk.

### 6.2. MIGROS

Migros has been purchasing strawberries from the Doñana region for around 20 years.

Our suppliers work on officially legal and Global GAP-certified fields and are responsible in their use of water, e.g. with moisture probes in the soil and optimised drip irrigation. In addition, our producers regularly check the water quality in order to prevent contamination.

A Migros delegation visits the suppliers on site at least once a year to gain a first-hand impression.

Migros is critical of the illegal production fields. The Doñana area must be protected as best as possible. This is in the interest of the environment and also the local economic region. That is why Migros - together with other European retailers - signed an open letter to the Andalusian government in 2022 demanding that the illegal fields not be legalized.

The problem in this region is not value-added projects like that of Migros, but the plantations that illegally and disproportionately use land and water.

However, a complete withdrawal from the region would not solve the problem and in our case would only punish our long-standing local partners. As mentioned, these partners consistently implement the standards required by Migros and go the extra mile in terms of sustainable cultivation and social standards.

The water problem in southern Spain must also be viewed in a larger context, in which many factors have an influence, including tourism. Blaming fruit and vegetable production alone is too simplistic.

With regard to social standards, suppliers are GRASP-certified (GRASP = Risk Assessment on Social Practice). This standard sets requirements for correct working conditions.



All suppliers are audited annually by a Spanish auditing company using an additional Migros checklist. This examines further requirements that Migros has developed in recent years together with local stakeholders (unions, NGOs and producer associations). Round tables with stakeholders and producers are also held from time to time, which Migros organises (social dialogue). Migros is also a co-initiator of Apellando. By the way, Migros not only sources strawberries from Spain, but also from Italy.

Migros is deliberately not running strawberry promotions until the end of February so as not to increase demand in winter. Our customers want a healthy and balanced diet. The berries make an important contribution to this, even in the phase when not many Swiss fruits are available. And demand is constantly increasing. A growing desire for (straw)berries also benefits Swiss producers, as Swiss strawberries also find good sales as soon as the domestic season begins.

Swiss fruit and vegetables are always a priority for us, but there is not always enough product and Migros sees it as its task to cover the needs and wishes of a wide range of customers. Products that do not meet any needs are not purchased and automatically disappear from the shelves. Many customers clearly appreciate the range on offer.

Sun-ripened strawberries from Spain or Italy can also be harvested in the winter months (from around the beginning of January) thanks to the mild climate. The CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of imported strawberries is better than that of strawberries grown in fossil-fuel-heated Swiss greenhouses.

As soon as strawberries are available in Switzerland, Migros will of course offer them. Migros is the largest buyer of agricultural raw materials and products in Switzerland.

### **This is how Migros make the strawberry greener**

Since 2022, Migros has sourced the majority of its strawberries from Spanish producers who meet the following sustainability requirements.

#### **Optimised water management**

- Water saving through drip irrigation and precise measurement of water consumption.
- Reduced water pollution through strict controls and better treatment.

#### **Preventive measures to prevent erosion**

- Plants with good root penetration stabilise the soil and thus prevent erosion.
- Exclusive use of legally developed cultivation areas.
- Creation of flower strips and refuges for animals.

#### **Reduce pesticide use for biodiversity protection:**

- Increased use of biological methods, such as pest control with beneficial organisms.
- Requirements for the use of less environmentally harmful plant protection products.
- Optimised and targeted use of plant protection products.



### 6.3. COOP

Swiss products are a priority for Coop. As soon as products from Switzerland are available in sufficient quality and quantity, we offer them to our customers. We adapt to the needs of our customers and therefore also offer berries outside of the Swiss season.

Coop has been committed to more sustainability in berry production in the Huelva region since 2005. To ensure that the activities are implemented in a broad and coordinated manner and thus have a major impact, Coop is actively involved in various committees in addition to its own projects. These include the SAI Berry Group, which trains producers in sustainable water management, which constantly reduces water consumption in production. In addition, Coop has developed the Spring water standard together with the WWF and Global GAP and implemented it with berry suppliers from the Huelva region. This standard includes the following points:

- Management of legal areas with legal water sources
- Efficient water management
- Documentation of water consumption

The berry season is accompanied by additional checks by an independent service provider. The legality of the water sources is also checked. For each shipment, an on-site check is carried out to determine which producer the cooperative has purchased the raw material from for Coop. This ensures traceability. The Coop subsidiary Alifresca also works actively on site with associations such as the WWF to further improve the situation in the area.

### 6.4. Aldi Suisse

Whenever possible, we source our strawberries from Swiss suppliers. During the Swiss season, we reduce imports by offering Swiss berries. We also only advertise the fruit during the Swiss strawberry season to promote consumers' seasonal understanding. However, we always tailor our range to the needs of our customers. And since there is demand for strawberries outside of the Swiss strawberry season, we continue to offer them. To do this, we rely on suppliers in various countries - including Spain and the Huelva region.

We source our strawberries from GLOBALG.AP or equivalent certified farms. The certification bodies ensure that these are legal producers.

We know about the situation in the Huelva region, are aware of the problems surrounding water scarcity and have supported WWF Spain (via the ALDI SÜD Group) in its commitment.

Together with the group of companies, we have defined requirements for efficient water management in agriculture for the 15 best-selling fruit and vegetable products from water-critical regions. This also includes strawberries from water-critical regions such as Huelva in Spain. The aim is to systematically optimise water management along our supply chain. We reserve the right to temporarily block producers who cannot demonstrate a water standard accepted by ALDI.

Through the ALDI SÜD Group, we are involved as a sponsor in the Water Stewardship project for sustainable water management in southern Spain, which promotes collective measures at the catchment and river level in southern Spain. The aim of these measures is to improve water management in the main fruit and vegetable growing areas, especially in Andalusia and Murcia and in the future in Valencia, and to reduce the risks associated with water.





## 6.5. LIDL

We see it as our responsibility to use our influence to bring about positive change and are therefore monitoring the situation in berry cultivation in southern Spain very closely.

The responsible use of water is a central field of action in Lidl's international sustainability strategy. Our fruit and vegetable producers are therefore required to be certified according to the internationally recognised GLOBAL GAP or to a comparable standard.

The standard considers basic aspects of water use. Together with GLOBAL GAP and other partners, Lidl has developed an industry-wide standard for protecting biodiversity in conventional fruit and vegetable cultivation in Europe - the GLOBALG.AP Add-On BioDiversity. Lidl is the first European food retailer to work with the standard and is initially applying it to over 900 producers from various European countries.

By the end of February 2026, 100 percent of our fruit and vegetable producers from high-risk countries should be certified according to recognised water standards. With the help of the WWF water risk filter, we are focusing on nine water risk countries: Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Egypt, Morocco, Israel, Chile and South Africa. With our ambitious water strategy, to which all 31 Lidl national companies have committed, we want to set new standards for sustainable water management in our industry.

In terms of concrete implementation, Lidl supports recognised seal initiatives and at the same time sets minimum standards for sustainable production practices with regard to responsible use of water. Our approach is based on the water standards of the Basket of Water of the Sustainability Initiative Fruit & Vegetables (SIFAV). This includes, for example, the Global GAP SPRING Standard ("Sustainable Program for Irrigation and Groundwater Use"). In addition, as an active member of the multi-stakeholder initiative "Alliance for Water Stewardship", we are involved in projects in regions with high water risk.

A project to pilot the standards of the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) has already been completed in two Spanish companies in Huelva and Murcia.

We are currently working on deriving concrete measures from the experiences of this pilot project. A significant proportion of our suppliers, producers and areas in the Huelva region are already SPRING certified. This certification also addresses the legality of water use on the company.



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