

# Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in Switzerland

**Targets set from 2025**  
in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Protocol



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Food Safety and  
Veterinary Office FSVO

Federal Office for the Environment FOEN

## Preamble

The Protocol on Water and Health aims at improving water management to reduce and prevent the spread of water-related diseases. Good management of the entire water cycle is vital to ensure that water intended for human consumption is of good quality and does not endanger the health of consumers.

The implementation of this Protocol, which was ratified by the Swiss Parliament in 2006, lies primarily in the responsibility of the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office and the Federal Office for the Environment. These two bodies work closely together in this field and have established the targets referred to in article 6 paragraph 2 of the Protocol.

Most of these targets are linked to regular activities set out in the actual legislations. These activities are described in the Swiss Waters Protection Act or in the Swiss Foodstuffs Act. Consequently, many targets are linked to on-going activities with no corresponding deadlines. In some other cases, the activities have been declared as achieved (e.g. access to drinking water) or not relevant for Switzerland (e.g. aquaculture).

The targets, first published in 2017, have been adjusted based on an evaluation at the federal level. The targets listed below will apply from 2025.

By publishing this document we assume to be in accordance with the requirements of the Protocol.

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## 1) Classification of targets

The targets described in the following sections are set differently. The following classification applies:

- **Target (A):** A target that was discussed and laid down definitively by the federal offices and established on a legal basis.
- **Proposed target (B):** A target decided by the authorities but which will require the law to be amended. However, not all the steps associated with amending the corresponding act or ordinance (consultation process, referendum, possible vote) have yet been completed.
- **Possible target (C):** A target proposed by an authority but which has not yet been discussed with all the stakeholders concerned

## 2) National targets and their achievement with respect to the Protocol on Water and Health<sup>1</sup>

No.	Protocol ref. (art. para. and let.)	Subject	Defined target (classification)	Deadline	Responsibility	Target indicator
1	6.2 a	Quality of drinking water	Setting up of a national data system based on an optimal drinking water data management. (A)	2028	FSVO	All cantons provide data through this data system
2	6.2 b	Reduction of the number and scale of outbreaks of water-related disease	Developing a reporting system for incidents and outbreaks of disease caused by water, in collaboration with the FOPH. (A)	Drinking water: established;  Water in publicly accessible baths and showers (focus on <i>Legionella</i> spp.): 2028	FSVO in collaboration with FOPH	Drinking water: Maintaining a low number of outbreaks of water-related diseases;  Water in publicly accessible baths and showers: Reporting system established

<sup>1</sup> Protocol on water and health to the 1992 convention on the protection and use of transboundary watercourses and international lakes

No.	Protocol ref. (art. para. and let.)	Subject	Defined target (classification)	Deadline	Responsibility	Target indicator
3	6.2 c	Access to drinking water	<p>100% of the Swiss population has access to drinking water. (B)</p> <p>An emergency infrastructure to improve water supply in exceptional situations has been created and a new ordinance has been approved. (A)</p> <p>Therefore, no further targets are set in this regard.</p>	Target achieved	FOEN	% of the Swiss population with access to drinking water
4	6.2 d	Access to sanitation	<p>100% of the Swiss population has access to sanitation. 97% of the Swiss population is connected to a central Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP). The waste water from the remaining 3% is treated in decentralised waste water treatment systems in accordance with the state of the art. (A)</p> <p>Therefore, no further targets are set in this regard.</p>	Target achieved	FOEN	% of the Swiss population with access to sanitation
5	6.2 e	Level of performance in water supply	<p>Conserving the value of infrastructures (water supply network, catchment areas, reservoirs, laboratories). (A)</p> <p>Encouraging regional planning and cross-linking of water suppliers. (C)</p>	Ongoing	FOEN	Implementation of regional plans for water supply

No.	Protocol ref. (art. para. and let.)	Subject	Defined target (classification)	Deadline	Responsibility	Target indicator
6	6.2 e	Level of performance in sanitation	<p>In order to protect aquatic flora and fauna as well as drinking water resources, the largest WWTPs, large WWTPs in the catchment area of lakes and other WWTPs on polluted water bodies are to be equipped with additional processes for the removal of organic trace elements. (A)</p> <p>Ensuring that the value of infrastructures is conserved (sewerage system, WWTP). (B)</p> <p>Promoting the regionalisation of urban drainage. (C)</p>	<p>Long-term task: 2040</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	FOEN	<p>Number of WWTPs upgraded</p> <p>Not applicable</p> <p>Not applicable</p>
7	6.2 f	Application of recognised good practice to the management of the water supply	<p>Producing good practice guidelines, in accordance with the HACCP concept, according to art. 80 of the Ordinance on Foodstuffs and Utility Articles. (A)</p> <p>Preparing and distributing drinking water in line with the detailed guidelines issued by the Swiss Gas and Water Industry Association (SGWA), the FSVO and the FOEN. (B)</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>FSVO</p> <p>Drinking water suppliers</p>	<p>Not applicable</p> <p>Not applicable</p>

No.	Protocol ref. (art. para. and let.)	Subject	Defined target (classification)	Deadline	Responsibility	Target indicator
8	6.2 f	Application of recognised good practice to the management of the water supply	<p>Safeguarding drinking water resources: the high density of use in densely populated regions of Switzerland is leading to increased pressure to utilise remaining available areas. Land is required for industry and commerce, residential areas, agriculture, etc. To protect the groundwater, from which 80% of drinking water is obtained, measures must be taken to ensure that no human activities or buildings endanger the groundwater. In Switzerland, the implementation status of groundwater protection is therefore being reviewed and, where necessary, strengthened. (C)</p> <p>Sustainable agricultural production; conserving natural resources. (A)</p> <p>Putting appropriate measures in place to prevent direct infiltration of agricultural pesticides and nutrients in runoff from farmyards and open fields and from drainage systems. (A)</p>	<p>2045</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>FOEN</p> <p>FOAG</p> <p>FOAG</p>	<p>Not applicable</p> <p>Implementation of the national pesticide action plan</p>

No.	Protocol ref. (art. para. and let.)	Subject	Defined target (classification)	Deadline	Responsibility	Target indicator
9	6.2 f	Application of recognised good practice to the management of sanitation	Good practice in communal sanitation is defined and defined by the recommendations of the FOEN and the guidelines of the Swiss Water Association (VSA). For industrial waste water, the state-of-the-art technology according to the Waters Protection Ordinance (WPO) and the decisions and recommendations of international water protection commissions apply. (A)	Completed	FOEN	Recommendations published
10	6.2 g (i)	Discharges of untreated waste water	Ensure that no untreated contaminated waste water is discharged or infiltrated into water bodies, as required by law. (A)	Ongoing	FOEN	Not applicable
11	6.2 g (ii)	Discharges of storm water overflows	Treatment of road runoff. Depending on the average daily traffic volume and the quality of the water body into which road runoff is discharged, road runoff is considered polluted and must be treated. This requires the redesign of the road drainage systems which is time-consuming. (A)	Ongoing	FOEN	Not applicable
			Optimisation of combined sewer overflow (CSO). Pollutants are discharged into water bodies through CSOs. Better management of the existing sewerage infrastructure can reduce these discharges. (C)	Ongoing		Not applicable

No.	Protocol ref. (art. para. and let.)	Subject	Defined target (classification)	Deadline	Responsibility	Target indicator
12	6.2 h	Quality of discharges from waste water treatment plants	100 % of waste water treatment plants meet the requirements for discharges of communal waste water set out in the WPO. Treatment of industrial waste water according to the state-of-the-art technology. (A)	Ongoing	FOEN	Not applicable
13	6.2 i, first part	Disposal or reuse of sewage sludge	The agricultural use of sewage sludge has been banned in Switzerland since 2008.	None	FOEN	Not applicable
14	6.2 i, second part	Quality of waste water used for irrigation purposes	According to art. 7 of the Federal Act on the Protection of Waters (Waters Protection Act, WPA) and art. 8 of the WPO, contaminated waste water may not be used for irrigation purposes in Switzerland.  Therefore, no targets are set in this regard.	None	FOEN	Not applicable

No.	Protocol ref. (art. para. and let.)	Subject	Defined target (classification)	Deadline	Responsibility	Target indicator
15	6.2 j, first part	Quality of waters used as sources for drinking water	Fulfilling the quality requirements for surface waters of the WPO, Annex 2. (A)	Ongoing	FOEN	Not applicable
			The quality of groundwater which is used for drinking water or is intended as such meets the requirements of the WPO, Annex 2. (A)	Ongoing	FOEN	Not applicable
			Reducing the nitrate levels in groundwater (projects according to art. 62a WPA). (A)	Ongoing	FOAG	Not applicable
			Improving the enforcement of water protection legislation: increasing information and supervision. (B)	Ongoing	FOEN	Not applicable
			Comprehensively recording surface water quality in Switzerland by means of the harmonised 'Methods for the analysis and assessment of surface waters' and by corresponding methods for the lakes. (A)	2028	FOEN	Not applicable
16	6.2 j, second part	Quality of waters used for bathing (rivers and lake)	Bathing water quality is at least of sufficient quality in all river and lake resorts that are regularly inspected as part of the European Environment Agency's (EEA) monitoring program. (A)	Ongoing	FOEN	Number of bathing sites that do not reach the requirements.
17	6.2 j, third part	Quality of waters used for aquacultures	No significant aquacultures exist in Switzerland. Therefore, no targets are set for this parameter	None	FOEN	Not applicable

No.	Protocol ref. (art. para. and let.)	Subject	Defined target (classification)	Deadline	Responsibility	Target indicator
18	6.2 k	Application of recognised practice to the management of enclosed waters used for bathing	Lay down a Swiss Bathing Water Ordinance at national level. (A)  Assessment of the implementation of the new legislation: conformity of bathing water regarding <i>Legionella</i> spp. (C)	Completed  2028	FSVO	Not applicable  90% conformity of the parameter value for <i>Legionella</i> spp. in bathing water
19	6.2 l	Identification and remediation of particularly contaminated sites	Recording, investigating and remediating contaminated sites. The cantons fulfil their obligations in accordance with the Ordinance on the Remediation of Polluted Sites (Contaminated Sites Ordinance, CSO) concerning local pollutants that could jeopardise waters, soil and air. (A)	Target achieved (Recording) 2032 (Investigations)  2045 (Remediations)	FOEN	All the polluted sites are registered  Investigations of the sites are finished  Remediation is finished
20	6.2 m	Effectiveness of systems for managing, developing, protecting and using water resources	The federal government promotes integrated river basin management:  1. Transforming some of the heavily engineered waters into as natural a condition as possible within a few generations, and defining an adequate area for all waters which may only be managed extensively as an ecological compensation area (biodiversity promotion area from 2014). (A)  2. In addition, eliminating the negative effects on waters of hydroelectric power generation (hydropeaking, bed-load balance, accessibility for fish) as far as possible until 2030. (A)	2090          2030	FOEN	25 % of waters in a bad morphological condition must be revitalised          Not applicable

### **3) List of abbreviations**

- CSO Combined sewer overflows
- EEA European Environment Agency
- FOAG Federal Office of Agriculture
- FOEN Federal Office for the Environment
- FOPH Federal Office of Public Health
- FSVO Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office
- SVGW Association for water, gas and district heating
- VSA Swiss Water Association
- WWTP Waste Water Treatment Plant

### **4) Publication of national targets**

These targets and the actual status concerning their implementation – presented in the corresponding Swiss Status Report – are available on the homepage of the FSVO<sup>2</sup>.

**Berne, 16 December 2024**

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<sup>2</sup> [www.blv.admin.ch](http://www.blv.admin.ch) > Food and nutrition > Publications > Statistics and reports: Food safety > Water and Health