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## INCOPA is ready to support the implementation of more stringent phosphorus emission limits in urban wastewater, with low carbon footprint inorganic coagulants

As part of the revision of the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD), the European Commission is finalising its impact assessment of lower thresholds for phosphorus discharges into the natural environment.

The Inorganic Coagulant Producer Association (INCOPA), a sector group of Cefic, supports lower thresholds for phosphorus emissions in urban wastewater. Its members recommend physico-chemical phosphorus **removal** with iron and aluminium salts as the most cost-effective method.

Since the 1960's, coagulants (based on iron or aluminium) have been added to the primary treatment of wastewater to prevent the eutrophication<sup>1</sup> process in natural waters such as lakes, rivers and seas. Today, many urban wastewater treatment plants use large quantities of inorganic coagulants to remove phosphates in different steps of the treatment process, to comply with the phosphorus emission limits of the current Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC).

Phosphorus is also a key resource in agriculture and the food industry among others. It is recognized as a **Critical Raw Material**<sup>2</sup> by the European Commission. Beyond removing it from wastewater, every effort should be made to **recover** it. The use of coagulants allow for economically viable recovery of the removed phosphorus by several methods. By allowing for phosphorus recovery, inorganic coagulants also participate to the **circular economy**.

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<sup>1</sup> Eutrophication: process by which an entire body of water, or parts of it, becomes progressively enriched with minerals and nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus.

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/critical-raw-materials\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/critical-raw-materials_en)

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Furthermore, iron and aluminium salts are obtained from the **recycling**<sup>3</sup> of co-products and secondary raw materials generated by several industries. And in line with the ambitions of the EU Green Deal, they have a **low carbon footprint**<sup>4</sup>.

With decades of experience, INCOPA's members are ready to support and accompany the water industry to meet more ambitious phosphorus discharge limits with well-established inorganic coagulants. Following this path, we will contribute to the conservation of natural resources, close natural cycles and thus protect our environment.

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**Cefic**, the European Chemical Industry Council, founded in 1972, is the voice of large, medium and small chemical companies across Europe, which provide 1.2 million jobs and account for 16% of world chemicals production.

**INCOPA**, a Cefic Sector Group, is the European Inorganic Coagulants Producers Association and it represents more than 30 producers with more than 80 production sites in Europe, which are responsible for 85% of the European coagulant production capacity.

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<sup>3</sup> See INCOPA Circular Economy infographics on iron-based and aluminium-based coagulants:  
<https://www.incopa.org/news/incopa-circular-economy-infographics/>

<sup>4</sup> See INCOPA infographic on LCA of Wastewater Treatment Plant Processes: infographics and full report:  
<https://www.incopa.org/news/incopa-infographic-on-lca-of-wastewater-treatment-plant-processes/>