

Following the letter sent by Hidrobal (the municipal water company) where it communicated a warning about the quality of water supplied to our homes, the City Council contacted the company to clarify some doubts and concerns, as well as those claims or complaints that citizens required about this issue.

We planned a meeting with the company, where we discussed the following points:

1. Citizens are paying for unfit water at the same price as good water, appropriate for human consumption?

No. The fee currently paid for water consumption in our homes is not related with the quality of the water supplied. This fee includes the water extraction (from the well), distribution network, electrical expenses, network maintenance, lab analysis and staff costs. Therefore, this is the price regardless of water quality (it's the same rate throughout the region of Pla de Mallorca).

2. Why the water has a high level of nitrates?

For many years the rates of nitrates in our waters move within these parameters, and these can vary depending on several factors such as the season of the year. The contamination of the aquifers is not a new problem. Domestic wastewater, coming from our homes, contains organic pollutants (urine, rubbish, food waste ...), cleaning products, oils and remains of paintings. If these products are filtered, they can reach rainwater pipes, and finally the wells, producing an increase of water pollution (nitrate concentration may increase, including other chemical parameters).

The farming wastewater and intensive crops, which use large amounts of fertilizers and pesticides, the water flowing through the streets and roofs when it rains, dragging all types of materials (plastics, demolition material, paper, cans...), the detergents containing lot of phosphates, etc. can achieve rainwater pipes. Also, potable water from aquifers may mixture with fresh sea salt water, due to an excessive extraction. All these events affect groundwater and finally reach the extraction wells. Any of these contaminations may cause not desirable concentrations of nitrates.

This is not the first letter received in our homes, regarding this issue. Since 2005 all the analysis shows a nitrate concentration slightly higher than 50 mg / L (established by the guidelines of World Health Organization to declare water fit for human consumption).

3. What are the solutions to decrease the concentration of nitrates in water?

- To reduce the contamination of water is necessary a public awareness of citizens regarding sustainability and the awareness about the repercussions of throwing products from the houses and farmland to the rainwater drains. Programs should be developed to achieve good agricultural practices and citizens must be aware of their bad practices. Public Health administration, environmental, and governmental institutions may declare vulnerable areas and should take preventive measures.

- Millionaire investments (outside the municipal scope) can be planned to build denitrifying plants, which would mean an increase of price in the water bill and produce a large amount of contaminated wastewater. We must think that the amount of water we drink or use in kitchen is only 5 or 10% of the total water consumed. The other water is used in showers, irrigation, washing ... and these don't need denitrificated water.

- Mixing the nitrified water with other water free of nitrates can reduce the index of this chemical. This is one of the solutions currently contemplated by government. A big pipe should be built to inject denitrified water (from a desalination plant or from aquifer Sa Marineta) into the current system, but this will increase the price of the service. We are studying several ways to reduce the impact on the price, just in case this is the final solution.

4. What user recommendations concerning network must be followed?

The main thing to do is ensure that everybody is awareness about the contamination of water, due to the products injected into pipelines, rainwater, underground... all these products may return to our taps (in our homes) as contaminated water (with high level of nitrates).

Do not drink or cook with the water flowing directly from the tap.

In any case, you can mix the tap water with bottled water, to reduce the concentration of nitrates, so it will be located within the parameters suitable for human consumption (according to WHO), which would be the same solution explained in the last point of paragraph 3.

You can install a reverse osmosis device before the tap to partially remove the nitrate concentration and to maintain the chemical parameters within the guidelines levels for human consumption (according to WHO). This solution is more expensive for individuals; but with a proper maintenance, these reverse osmosis devices filter many microorganisms and impurities from the water, making it more 'clean' and increasing its quality, not only from the health and hygiene point of view, but also from organoleptic point of view.

5. What will the City Council do regarding all the previous points?

From now on, the website of the city of Sineu will have a direct link to the SINAI website, where you can find information on the latest analysis conducted on the water network and provides detailed explanation about all issues regarding water for human consumption.

Also, we'll require to Hidrobal all the bimonthly analytical results, as soon as they have them.

We'll urge the regional government to allocate human and financial resources to improve water quality by making necessary investments.

We'll pressure the concessionaire company of the water service to do everything in their hands to improve the quality of our water.

We hope this information has been useful for you.