Presentation of new collaboration agreement between the Catalan Water Agency and ICFO

Minister of Territory and Sustainability, Damia Calvet, visited ICFO to present the collaboration agreement to develop a system to rapidly measure water quality in bathing areas.

September 21, 2020

The management of water quality in Catalonia's bathing areas is increasingly in need of innovative tools that will provide agile and effective diagnostics. The Minister of Territory and Sustainability, Damia Calvet, presented the agreement between the Catalan Water Agency (ACA), and ICFO to develop a new system to detect and monitor undesirable microorganisms (mainly intestinal enterococci and escherichia coli) in Catalonia's beaches and bathing waters, caused by episodes of heavy rain and flooding. The goal is to detect possible altercations of water quality in a period of no more than 3 hours. Current procedures require between 24 and 48 hours.

Calvet referred to the noticeable improvements in the quality of water in bathing areas over the past two decades, explaining that i¿½in the ?90s, only 24% of the beaches could boast a water quality in the category of ?excellent', while today 94% cani¿½. "All this," he said, has been achieved by complying with the European bathing water directive, but we want t go further, advancing in innovation," because "where we now have a control system, we can improve substantially by going beyond compliance with legislation, and improving peop e's natural environment and quality of life.i¿½ Calvet also defended " the environment l and green taxations, such as the water tax, a tax we established and which was diffic lt to implement, has allowed us to get to where we are now" by allowing the ACA to finan e and carry out projects such as what has been presented today.i¿½

Commitment to research and innovation

The new system will make it possible to establish checkpoints in varying locations in contrast to the reliance on fixed sampling stations. In addition, it will facilitate onsite analysis of samples, resulting in rapid results and improved decision- making capabilities.

The collaboration between ACA and ICFO also aims to integrate a system to monitor the presence of phytoplankton. It is common during the summer for beaches with certain characteristics (lack of currents and waves and high water temperatures) to have proliferations of phytoplankton. In most cases, they are not harmful to bathers and primarily cause unsightly changes in the color of the water. This project also aims to rapidly analyze phytoplankton concentrations responsible for proliferations.