

'Tried & Tested' - nutrient management planning in context

Background

The England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) is a government initiative in which 40 catchments across England have been identified as priority areas to change farm practices and to reduce water pollution from agriculture. As part of this initiative, meetings and events are held on a regular basis in the priority catchments on a range of different topics, including nutrient management. This case study is based on one such meeting held on a farm near Taunton at the end of November.



Roy Hayes, Catchment Officer for the Somerset Levels and Moors: Tone, Yeo & Cary talks through the completion of a nutrient budget during the workshop.

Why attend a nutrient management workshop?

The workshop was run by Jo Oborn (Somerset FWAG) and Roy Hayes (Catchment Officer for the Somerset Levels and Moors: Tone, Yeo & Cary), both well known to farmers locally. Jo, an experienced agronomist, led much of the technical input to the workshop.

Topics covered during the course of the workshop included a step by step guide to completing a nutrient management plan which covered calculating the fertiliser requirement for different crops using soil analyses and taking manure and slurry applications into account.

The benefits

Worked examples of nutrient management planning for a range of crop types, including maize, oil seed rape and winter wheat, with different histories of past cropping and for a range of soil types were demonstrated. For those in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone, help with some of the Action Plan requirements were also covered.

The benefits of completing a nutrient management plan include a better return from nutrient inputs which can lead to improved crop quality and particularly where manures and slurries are being used, potential cost savings. The benefits can also extend to the environment through a reduced risk of loss of nutrients to water.

Tried & Tested - nutrient management planning in context

'Tried & Tested' the paper-based nutrient management plan helps demonstrate the step-by-step approach to nutrient management planning and helps farmers meet the requirements of the Nitrate Vulnerable Zones regulation.



Farmers attending the workshop complete a nutrient budget.

Comments from the farmers attending included:-

'Very useful. Covered a complicated issue very simply and well'.

'I knew a bit about this before, but coming back for a second time was very useful. It was easy to follow and the discussion was very focused.'