

Farming rules for water (The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018)

Planning the use of manures and fertilisers – Rule 1

Rule 1 of the Farming rules for water (Regulations 4 and 5 of the Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018) sets out the requirements for nutrient applications, building on the positive, professional and responsible approach to the use of organic materials and fertilisers the farming sector has worked hard to develop.

Rule 1 says that ‘the application of organic manures or manufactured fertiliser must be planned so that it does not exceed the needs of the soil and crop on the land or does not give rise to a significant risk of water pollution and also takes into account the weather conditions and forecasts for the land at the time of the application. In addition reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent water pollution from the application’.

Your nutrient planning must take into account the results of soil testing, which must be done at least every five years on land that is cultivated by physical or chemical means. Soil nitrogen supply (SNS) can be used to assess N levels instead of soil testing.

Nutrient management planning

You will have to demonstrate how you have planned your nutrient needs to comply with Rule 1

To do this you will need to:

- Plan what nutrients you are going to spread on the land
- Ensure that these nutrients are only applied in quantities that are sufficient to meet and not exceed the crop or soil need on cultivated agricultural land
- Ensure that they must only be applied at a time when they will be needed by the soil and a crop on that land.

Evidence required

The Environment Agency will be expecting industry recognised guidance to have been used to assess compliance with the rules. If a land manager can supply evidence for deviating from a recognised nutrient management system (such as RB209) we will take this into consideration.

Guidance

Nutrients from all sources including organic manures from your own operations, digestates and biosolids from off farm or manufactured fertilisers must be taken into account in your plan.

You should calculate the crop nutrient requirement for each cultivated land parcel using a manual like the AHDB’s nutrient management guide (RB209) or a

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professionally produced nutrient management plan (for example produced by an agronomist or FACTS adviser). Alternatively, you can use farm software like [PLANET, MANNER-NPK](#), or nutrient management tools like those provided by Tried and Tested.

Spreading - basic information

Evidence required

One way of demonstrating this is to record the high risk and no spreading zones on a map. You must also take into account any risks arising from weather conditions at the time of spreading. Further detailed information can be found in the Government's [Guide to protecting water, soil and air](#).

Guidance

When on farm our officers will expect you to demonstrate that you have considered basic information relating to the risks of spreading:

- Location and approximate direction of field drains
- Location of watercourses (including ditches) and coastal waters
- Location of boreholes, wells and springs
- The slope of the land, in particular if greater than 12°
- Soil type and condition of the land (e.g. soil wetness, compaction)

Spreading organic manures

Evidence required of what has been spread

Our officers will be checking that each cultivated field that is used for spreading materials

- has a calculation that takes into account crop and soil need based on a recognised nutrient planning system such as RB209. Agreement from the Environment Agency before spreading is prudent if a different approach is adopted to the use of a recognised nutrient planning system,
- that has been adjusted to reflect the results of your soil testing; and
- that you can demonstrate what has been spread and when and that this is in accordance with your crop and soil needs or was not likely to cause significant diffuse water pollution.

Guidance

Organic manures can be plant, animal or human derived. They may be generated on the farm or come from off-farm sources and may be controlled by permits. Further information on [complying with landspreading permits](#) is also available and details the types of materials that you can spread on you land. The NFU has also provided a [checklist](#) to which you can refer.

Soil testing

Evidence required

Keep your soil analysis results to demonstrate that you are complying with the requirement for up-to-date soil testing.

Guidance

You will need to know what the existing nutrient levels are in the soil. Rule 1 (Regulation 5) requires you to use the results of soil testing for pH, N, P, K and Mg for every cultivated field and these must be no more than 5 years old. Nitrogen levels may be determined by assessing the Soil Nitrogen Supply (SNS) using, for example, the [AHDB Nutrient Management Guide \(RB209\)](#)

We recommend that you get your soil sample tested at an accredited laboratory. There are numerous commercial laboratories that can provide a soil sampling service. [Tried and Tested](#) Professional Nutrient Management and the Soil Association list a number of providers.

Other regulations/legislation relating to nutrient management

Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) / Countryside Stewardship

If you are in a nitrate vulnerable zone (NVZ) you must follow the [NVZ rules](#) on storing and using nitrogen fertilisers. In addition the government's guide on [using organic manures and manufactured fertilisers on farmland](#) sets out the rules on land if you are in an Environmental or Countryside Stewardship agreement outside an NVZ and have the relevant reduced fertiliser options.

Silage, Slurry and Fuel Oil (SSAFO)

If you store slurry this must be done in accordance with [SSAFO](#) regulations (and in accordance with NVZ rules if you are within an NVZ). We recommend you have a minimum of six months storage capacity rather than four.

For other materials we recommend you store materials in accordance with the regulations, again with a minimum of six months capacity.