Building on the baseline: the benefits of better regulation for farming and land management

Wildlife & Countryside Link briefing, April 2023

SUMMARY:

The benefits of better regulation are:

- Helping Government to meet its environmental targets in a cost-effective way.
- Ensuring that the Government is investing in schemes that deliver additionality rather than in actions that should be carried out as standard.
- Underpinning certainty, profitability and resilience for farmers, land managers and other businesses, such as through replacing non-statutory cross-compliance measures with statutory obligations.

Areas which could benefit from a more comprehensive regulatory approach are:

- Carbon: introducing protections for soil multifunctionality, which particularly protects them as carbon sinks.
- Nitrogen and ammonia: introducing statutory measures like waterbody buffers, and producing a comprehensive nitrogen strategy which consolidates existing nitrogen regulations and introducing a roadmap for statutory measures to reduce ammonia emissions.
- Biodiversity: introducing strengthened hedgerow protections to ensure that hedgerows cannot be damaged or cut at inappropriate times.

REGULATING FOR FOOD SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

The Agricultural Transition Plan 2021-2024 contained a commitment to reform farming regulation by 2027. The government has also signalled its intent to move away from the laws inherited from the EU, and to simplify the farming regulatory environment. The Environmental Land Management Update (February 2023) also stated that the Government is *'reforming [its] approach to farm regulation to make it clearer, fairer and more effective where it matters'* and that the *'regulatory baseline will continue to evolve over time, so that we can target our payments towards the goods and services that really make a difference'*.

In 2024, farming payments will be "delinked" from EU-derived rules known as cross-compliance, some of which are not included in domestic regulation and will be lost. The Government has also introduced the Retained EU Law (Revocation & Reform) Bill, which is intended to ''save, repeal, replace, restate or assimilate'' retained EU law (known as REUL) applying in the UK.[i] The Bill will cover over 2,400 pieces of REUL, which will either be dropped or adapted into UK law. Many of these regulations apply to the farmed environment, and with a possible deadline of the end of 2023 for reform, it is paramount that the Government comes forward with a credible and robust proposal for future farming regulation.

Of course, a combination of sound regulation and incentives will be needed to drive the change needed in land management practices across England. While progress on Environmental Land Management (ELM) is underway, a detailed plan for future farming regulation is yet to be developed.

A fresh approach to the system of farm regulation is needed now, given the scale of environmental challenges ahead and the projected impacts on and the role of the farming sectoring in meeting these. Climate change, the loss of nature and the depletion of soils pose a threat to the economy and to food security.

For example, the long hot summer of 2018, of a type we can expect to see more of in the years ahead, saw onion yields down 40%, carrot yields down 25% and potato yields down 20%.[ii] Extreme drought and flooding in 2020 also led to a 40.5% decrease in wheat production, which was reflected in an 83% decrease in UK wheat exports between 2019-2021.[iii,iv] Similarly in 2018 extreme weather conditions resulted in losses to wheat, oilseed rape and potato crops, leading to roughly £185m in losses to the UK economy.

The Government has responded to these challenges by setting new targets under the Environment Act and the Climate Change Act. However, evidence shows that meeting many of these targets will require the use of improved regulation and enforcement for land management. For example:

- Delivering an increase in species abundance of between 15%-30% by 2037 would require stronger regulation, enforcement and compliance.[v]
- To deliver the restoration of 750,000ha of habitat it was deemed that a 'shift in environmental regulation and regulatory culture' is 'essential'.[vi]
- To meet Net Zero, the Climate Change Committee recommends[vii]:
    - Cross-compliance measures (such as minimising soil erosion and waterbody buffering) are maintained whether or not land managers are in receipt of public money
    - Nitrogen regulations are extended and strengthened, such as through extending the environmental permitting to the intensive dairy and beef sectors from 2025.
    - Improving air quality, particularly through tackling ammonia emissions through regulatory action.
    - Introducing regulations to protect soil carbon, such as preventing peat soils from being left bare.

Regulation must play a role in protecting natural resources which underpin food production. Creating more effective regulation can stimulate innovation, increase productivity and create resilience by building healthy natural assets. This is an important step in an ambitious agricultural transition.[viii]

A strong and effective regulatory baseline is also key to providing certainty for the farming sector, for businesses along the supply chain as well as private investors. For farmers, clear, robust and well-enforced regulation is essential to create a level playing field within the sector. It is important to note that working collaboratively with farmers through incentives, support, advice, clear guidance and firm timelines should for a core part of a new regulatory approach.

For food retailers, regulation provides a level of quality assurance that is desirable for consumers. For Government, an effective baseline is the foundation for value for money and certainty of outcomes, reducing the costs of environmental improvements through voluntary farming payment schemes. For private investors, regulation ensures that the assets they are investing in are not being compromised by poor practices.

CONSOLIDATING THE REGULATORY BASELINE AND FILLING THE GAPS

In building a better baseline there will be opportunities for some parts of regulation to be removed, others where existing regulation should be amended or consolidated to improve its implementation. In some cases it will be necessary to add new regulation where gaps in the existing baseline exist, meaning that vital environmental protections are missing. Enforcement must be assessed and improved to be able to meet a new baseline in the future.

Key areas where regulatory improvement is needed are:

1. Biodiversity: hedgerows

It is estimated that 40% of UK hedges (95,000 miles) are ancient and or species-rich.[ix] These vital habitats support 130 priority species under England's Biodiversity Action Plan, including birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and a host of invertebrates.[x] It is also estimated that existing hedgerows store as much as 9 million tonnes of

CO_2e ($MtCO_2e$)[xi]. Finally, hedgerows are good for farm businesses, providing shelter and food for livestock, they can improve crop yield as they can encourage beneficial insects helping with pest control and pollination.

Current cross-compliance rules protect hedgerows and other boundary features such as earth banks and stone banks from inappropriate management. For example land managers cannot spray pesticide or fertiliser within 2 metres of a hedgerow or other boundary features.

In the Environment Improvement Plan Defra has committed to "*ensure that hedgerows continue to be protected when existing cross compliance protections are lost in 2024*". This is a vital commitment, but Defra must act swiftly to plug the regulatory gap, to ensure no loss of protections in 2024.

If minimum hedgerow protection is not introduced as a statutory requirement, and ELM is the main means of protection for these vital assets, the cost to government will be greater, with a poorer environmental outcome if uptake is low. ELM funding should instead focus on extending and improving hedgerows. For example, boosting hedgerows by 40% would create 25,000 jobs over the next 30 years. For every £1 invested, they will yield £4.[xii] Together, better regulation and incentivisation will contribute toward Net Zero, as well as having benefits for biodiversity and for farm businesses.

Recommendation: The current Hedgerows Regulations could be amended to prohibit the removal of all hedgerows on agricultural land without permission from Natural England, and mandate that hedgerows are maintained and managed ecologically.[xiii]

2. Nutrient Management

Waterbody buffering

The loss of waterbody buffering under cross-compliance represents a weakening in environmental standards, and risks increasing river, lake, and coastal pollution further, undermining the Government's target to reduce diffuse pollution by 40% by 2038 and its target to halt the decline of nature by 2030. Much of our nature lives under the water.

Although an holistic catchment-based approach must be taken to address water pollution, a minimum statutory buffer strip would match the Farming Rules for Water guidance, it would simplify exiting buffer requirements, and it would have multiple benefits for aquatic and riparian biodiversity and climate including connectivity, carbon sequestration and of course improved water quality.

Introducing statutory waterbody buffering would also likely drive land managers into ELM schemes, as they could receive payments for creating habitats along and around waterbodies. There is also a clear opportunity for generating private revenue streams from buffer strips under the new Nutrient Mitigation and Biodiversity Net Gain schemes.

Recommendation: A statutory buffer strip ~~of 6-8m~~ along all water bodies should be introduced through the Farming Rules for Water. Incentives for wider and riparian (or 3D) buffer strips should be provided through the Sustainable Farming Incentive and Countryside Stewardship+.

Nutrient management

Nitrogen and phosphorus pollution from agriculture to air, soils and water has extensive impacts on biodiversity, public health and our climate. Diffuse pollution is the cause of 40% of waters failing to achieve good ecological health and Environment Agency monitoring data shows that the application of excess nutrients is the biggest cause of this; 87% of ammonia emissions in England and 71% of UK nitrous oxide emissions are from agriculture. Furthermore, poor water quality resulting from agriculture is estimated to cost £1.3 billion per annum and is the primary reason for a third of water bodies failing to meet Water Framework Directive Regulations objectives.[xiv]

The new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) sets a target to 'Reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources, by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects, including: reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half…'. Achieving this target will require rapid and significant action by Government and the agricultural industry and this cannot be delivered by voluntary measures alone.

The new SFI nutrient management standard goes some way towards incentivising best practice measures such as establishing and maintaining legumes and wildflower strips, which help to fix or filter out nitrogen pollution. However, as with all ELM standards, because they are voluntary they do not provide guarantee a country-wide shift in action on the ground and could be poor value for money if the regulatory baseline for nutrient management is not fit for purpose or well enforced. More coherent regulatory action is needed on nutrient pollution, which is coupled with incentives.

Furthermore, a strong regulatory standard would help improve efficiency in emerging markets for nutrient neutrality, which require housing developers to invest in nature-based solutions for nutrient pollution to avoid harm to protected land and water wildlife sites. As the market for nutrient credits develops, a strong and well-enforced regulatory baseline for nitrogen and phosphorous will drive investment in this area, and will likely drive uptake of ELM standards which can help farmers to reduce their nitrogen load to the environment.

At present the rules, regulations and guidance concerning nutrient nitrogen management are disparate and difficult to navigate. This has led to a piecemeal approach to tackling nutrient pollution, which can be difficult and disruptive for land managers to navigate.[xv]

Recommendation: The Government should come forward with a comprehensive nitrogen strategy, which includes complementary regulatory and non-regulatory measures to reduce pollution in line with the GBF Target 7. An analysis should also be carried out on the least integrated/effective parts of nutrient management and regulation and replacing them with something more coherent. These could present a set of rules, with a plan for how advice and incentives will drive action beyond the regulatory baseline.[xvi]

Ammonia emissions and air quality

A major gap in the current regulatory baseline for farming is the absence of a comprehensive approach to regulating ammonia and other atmospheric emissions. In the 25 Year Environment Plan (2018), Clean Air Strategy (2019) and Environmental Improvement Plan (2023), the Government made commitments to close this gap for ammonia emissions, which cause significant harm to human health as well as biodiversity.

In the 25 Year Plan, the Government acknowledged the relationship between agricultural practices and harmful ammonia emissions; it made a commitment that "new rules will require every farmer" to "start taking precautions to reduce ammonia emissions, thereby reducing pollution … and improving resource efficiency." This would be achieved by "[p]utting in place a robust framework to limit inputs of nitrogen-rich fertilisers such as manures, slurries and chemicals to economically efficient levels and to make sure they are stored and applied safely."[xvii]

The Clean Air Strategy set out a more detailed set of commitments to regulating ammonia emissions but these have not been delivered in the four years since the strategy was published. In relation to urea fertilisers, the Government reneged on its commitment to regulation in favour of an industry-led voluntary approach.

Most recently the Environmental Improvement Plan repeated a number of these commitments but took a more cautious approach to 'consider' expanding environmental permitting. Recently-published statistics show that ammonia emissions rose from 2020 to 2021, with agriculture continuing to be the dominant source, causing ongoing damage to biodiversity, ecosystems and public health. Related emissions of the greenhouse gas nitrous oxide also prevent the sector reaching its net zero ambition to mitigate climate change.

To maintain a significant gap around air quality in the regulatory baseline for farming not only misses an enormous opportunity to deliver an environmentally-comprehensive and integrated baseline for agriculture in

England, but also contravenes the 'polluter pays' principle and undermines the government's ability to achieve statutory targets for air quality, public health, biodiversity and net zero.

Recommendation: The Government should deliver its commitments to regulation of ammonia emissions without further delay and as part of a comprehensive nitrogen strategy.

3. Soil multifunctionality

Cropland soils in the UK have been heavily depleted of carbon stocks, having lost 40-60% under intensive management in recent decades.[xviii] Soil degradation, erosion, and compaction also results in loss of about £1.2 billion each year and reduce the capacity of UK soils to produce food. [xix]

A balance must be struck between ensuring that regulations protect soils adequately while enabling and providing incentives to enhance the functions of soils. In light of the government's commitment to ensure 60% of agricultural soils are sustainably managed by 2030, there is a strong case for new regulatory measures to protect soils as they provide several vital functions including irrigation and drainage, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, nutrient cycling and air quality benefits.

The dispersal of soil protection and enhancement measures across best practice measures (cross-compliance), statutory guidance (FRfW) and ELM is difficult to map, and difficult to navigate for farmers and land managers. There are both gaps in the existing regulations and that there are overlaps where some actions are both a regulatory requirements and paid for under Environmental Land Management.

Recommendation: To meet the government's commitments on net zero, ensure all soils are sustainably managed by 2030, and to meet other biodiversity targets and commitments under the 25YEP and the Environment Act, new statutory measures should be introduced which recognise and protect soil multifunctionality.[xx] These regulations could be consolidated under one set of rules, so that they are clear and easy to navigate. On top of these, ELM standards should pay for enhancements, that clearly go beyond this regulatory baseline.

NEXT STEPS

With multiple Government commitments on climate and biodiversity such as Net Zero and the Environment Act targets, there is a need for Defra to set out the role that regulation will play in the future to help meet these goals.

Action is needed swiftly to meet the commitment of reforming agricultural regulation by 2027, when we account for transition periods and the scale of improvements needed to meet the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and ultimately the economy.

Effective regulation and enforcement now, with a clear path to a stronger regulatory baseline in future, will form the basis for certainty, fairness and value for money in the transition to a regenerative farming future.

For more information contact:
Matt Browne & Hannah Conway, Wildlife and Countryside Link
E: matt@wcl.org.uk; hannah@wcl.org.uk T: 020 8078 3587| ML: 020 3855 4265

This briefing is supported by the following Link members:

A Rocha
Badger Trust
Bumblebee Conservation Trust
CIEEM
Floodplain Meadows Partnership
Institute of Fisheries Management
London Zoological Society
People's Trust for Endangered Species
RSPB
The Wildlife Trusts

ANNEX – supplementary evidence

Hedgerows

Current cross compliance requirements under Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) 7a require farmers and land managers to protect boundary features such as hedgerows, stone walls, earth banks and stone banks. Crucially, these requirements include a hedge cutting ban period and permissible dates for hedge laying/tree coppicing; and a ban on cultivation, pesticide and fertiliser use within 2m of a hedge or other boundary feature.

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 prohibit the intentional removal of some but not all hedgerows. For example, hedgerows of less than 30 years old are generally not covered. The regulations also do not protect hedgerows from ongoing degradation due to poor management, and the ploughing or the application of pesticides near the base. The 1997 regulation does not protect dry stone walls and earth banks. The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) offers a hedgerow standard, which will pay for good management of hedgerows. However, as this is a voluntary scheme, many farmers may not take it up, potentially leaving a significant proportion of the hedgerow network vulnerable. Removing protections for these vital assets means that hedgerows could be neglected, mismanaged, or damaged, to the detriment of biodiversity and, ultimately, farm businesses and those hedgerows not protected by the 1997 regulation could be removed to increase field sizes.

If minimum hedgerow protection is not introduced as a statutory requirement, and ELM is the main means of protection for these vital assets, the cost to government will be greater, with a poorer environmental outcome if uptake is low. In the event that 25% of farmers take up the SFI hedgerow standard, the cost to government would be an estimated £11.6m per year, while around 300,000km of hedges would be at risk. If there were a 90% uptake of hedgerows standard, just under 40,000km would be at risk, but the cost would be £67.3m per year.[xxi]

Waterbody buffering

GAEC 1 includes a requirement for buffer strips (green cover) next to water courses outside Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) and a requirement to keep a farm map with surface water and boreholes marked. Waterbody buffering GAEC 1 stipulates farmers/LMs:

- Must maintain green cover within a 2m margin (from centre of watercourse or ditch) or 1m of field ditch in land side of top of bank
- Must not apply fertiliser within 2m,
- Must not apply organic manure within 10m of a surface water and 50m of a spring/well/borehole
- Must not apply slurry, sewage sludge or anaerobic digestate within 6m
- Record keeping

While current GAEC 1 may not be particularly effective at protecting waterbodies because the buffers are too small, this does not mean that it should be removed altogether. In fact, it should be strengthened, to afford watercourses the protection they need to prevent harm. Evidence shows that 6-8m is the minimum effective width of buffer strips in most cases, although there are obviously variables in terms of soil type and what is being applied to the land.[xxii]

A statutory buffer strip may present income loss initially, however there is strong potential for income generation through enhancements to those buffer strips through Environmental Land Management and potentially biodiversity credits. If a 6-8m buffer strip were introduced as a minimum with some green cover, the lack or loss of income generation through food production would likely incentivise farmers to join ELM schemes to enhance those buffer strips to generate income. Riparian buffer strips would also attract private finance, such

as Biodiversity Net Gain or carbon credits. Guidance for these regulations could include protection of certain high-risk habitats such as floodplain meadows.

In sum, statutory buffer strips of 6-8m would prevent some level of pollution mitigation, while incentivising buffer strip enhancement through government or private schemes. This is a prime example of where regulation can drive decision-making, which ultimately will help the government to meet environmental commitments such as net zero.

Soil multifunctionality

GAECs 4, 5 and 6 state a requirement to protect soils from wind erosion and provision of minimum levels of green cover. Additionally, the guidance for Farming Rules for Water (FRfW) advises minimum green cover to prevent nutrient loss and improve soil structure. Data shows that most farmers are doing this, for example 76% of farmers already cover their grasslands overwinter.[xxiii] This suggests that many farmers are taking measures to protect soil without being paid to do so. This is because it makes business sense to improve drainage, fix nitrogen, prevent soil loss and enhance soil organic matter.

GAEC 6 on the 'maintenance of soil organic matter level through appropriate practices' has not gone far enough in protecting soil organic matter or soil multifunctionality. In practice, there was no obligation to measure and no baseline data for existing soil carbon stocks in the majority of farms, there are no mechanisms to establish either compliance or breach. The rule mainly bans practices which are already abandoned - the closest thing to a baseline is 'no crop residue burning in England'.

Currently, the SFI Grassland and Arable Soils standards also pay farmers and land managers to provide minimum green cover over winter. Paying for additional soil health measures through the SFI while losing protections for soils that already exist under cross-compliance would represent poor value for money, and risks weakening environmental standards overall because SFI is a voluntary scheme. At 2023 payment rates, a 90% uptake of both the grassland and arable soils intermediate standards alone would cost around £371.9m per year; 70% uptake of the same standards could cost around £289.2m per year (see Tables 1 and 2).

There is a clear need here for regulatory intervention which addresses soil multifunctionality, principally climate change mitigation and adaptation, wind erosion, water quality and biodiversity. This new regulatory approach for soil should also be created in a way that explicitly recognises the role and responsibility of the food supply industry - by enforcing regulations through their supply chains and basic standards, as well as ensuring they don't accidentally encourage non-compliance through contractual arrangements.

Table 1: Total budgetary need of the Arable and Horticultural Soils standards based on 2023 payment rates.[xxiv] (NB this excludes any supplementary payments or capital items)

ARABLE AND HORTICULTURAL SOILS STANDARD 2023			
Total croppable area= 6.1m ha			
SFI uptake	Total area (ha)	Introductory costs per annum (£ million) (2023 introductory= £22 p/ha)	Intermediate costs per annum (£ million) (2023 intermediate= £40 p/ha)
90% uptake	5490000	120780000	219600000
70% uptake (defra target)	4270000	93940000	170800000
50% uptake	3050000	67100000	122000000
25% uptake	1525000	33550000	61000000

Table 2: Total budgetary need of the Grassland Soils standards based on 2023 payment rates.[xxv] (NB this excludes any supplementary payments or capital items)

GRASSLAND SOILS STANDARD 2021			
Total area permanent grassland (2021)= 9.965m ha			
SFI uptake	Total area (ha)	Introductory costs per annum* (£ million) (2023 introductory- £28 p/ha)	Intermediate costs per annum (£ million) (2023 intermediate= £58 p/ha)
90% uptake	8968500	251118000	520173000
70% uptake (defra target)	6975500	195314000	404579000
50% uptake	4982500	139510000	288985000
25% uptake	2491250	69755000	144492500

Air Quality

In its 2019 Clean Air Strategy for England[xxvi], the Government elaborated on these 25 Year Plan commitments to a new regulatory framework. These commitments included:

- a requirement to reduce emissions from urea-based fertilisers, to be consulted upon in 2019 with a view to "introducing legislation in the shortest possible timeframe";
- a requirement for all solid manure and solid digestate spread to bare land to be incorporated rapidly with "legislation to be introduced in the shortest possible timeframe";
- a requirement to spread slurries and digestate using low-emission spreading equipment by 2025 or earlier;
- a requirement for slurry and digestate stores to be covered by 2027 or earlier;
- mandatory design standards for new intensive poultry, pig and beef livestock housing and dairy housing; and
- Extension of environmental permitting to dairy and beef farms by 2025[xxvii]

In March 2022, the Government abandoned plans for a firm regulatory approach to reduce emissions from urea-based fertilisers, in favour of a voluntary, industry-led approach. [xxviii]

The industry-led approach centres around the use of the private "Red Tractor" certification scheme to introduce a new Red Tractor assurance standard from April 2023 to control the use of urea-based fertilisers through the use of inhibitors and application timings.[xxix] However, relying on a private certification scheme as a substitute for a public regulatory framework to control environmental impacts is ineffective. Participation in such schemes is entirely voluntary, certification data is often not published and disqualification from a scheme does not prevent the polluting activity from carrying on and continuing to harm the environment.

The Government's response adds it will consider re-introducing its proposal for a regulatory approach to this area in 2025/26 "if the industry-led approach does not shift fertiliser use sufficiently"[xxx], however by 2026, there will only be 4 years left to achieve the 2030 NEC ammonia emissions target, by which time it is likely to be unattainable.

In terms of Government's five additional pledges relating to the regulation of ammonia emissions under the Clean Air Strategy 2019, little information is available about progress, suggesting that limited or no progress has been made to date.

[i] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-retained-eu-law-revocation-and-reform-bill-2022
[ii]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869062/structure-jun2018final-uk-28feb20.pdf
[iii]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/946161/structure-jun2020final-uk-22dec20.pdf
[iv] https://www.statista.com/statistics/299768/wheat-uk-exports-united-kingdom/
[v] https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-environment-policy/consultation-on-environmental-targets/supporting_documents/Biodiversity%20terrestrial%20and%20freshwater%20targets%20%20Detailed%20evidence%20report.pdf
[vi] https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-environment-policy/consultation-on-environmental-targets/supporting_documents/Biodiversity%20terrestrial%20and%20freshwater%20targets%20%20Detailed%20evidence%20report.pdf
[vii] https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/land-use-policies-for-a-net-zero-uk/
[viii] Note: this briefing does not address enforcement.
[ix] https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/habitats/hedgerows/
[x] https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/mind-the-gap-report-final.pdf

[xi] https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/mind-the-gap-report-final.pdf

[xii] https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/hedge-fund-executive-summary/

[xiii] Although this would still leave issues with enforcement. The Hedgerow Regulation are enforced by Local Authorities who lack capacity to detect breaches and take enforcement action.

[xv] https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/Finding_the_balance_report.pdf
[xvi] https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/Finding_the_balance_report.pdf
[xvii] See the 25 Year Plan at pp. 38 & 39.
[xviii] https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0662/POST-PN-0662.pdf
[xix] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-introduction

[xx] *Note the example set in Ireland where a guideline threshold for organic matter (3.4%) is set for farmers applying for the Single Farm Payment. On inspection, applicants will be required to provide the soil analytical report showing the organic matter levels and where it is less than 3.4% they must also show the CC-FAS report setting out, where applicable, the programme of remedial actions. From 2010 onwards, the inspecting officer will check that the remedial actions listed in the CC-FAS report are being implemented. (2009 Soil Organic Matter Guidance).*
[xxi] https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/mind-the-gap-report-final.pdf

[xxii] https://www.riverneneregionalpark.org/reference/brochures-downloads/nene-and-welland-support-for-farmer-action-nwsfa-downloads/protecting-water-from-agricultural-run-off-buffer-strips.pdf

[xxiii] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/996163/fps-ghg2021-statsnotice-24jun21.pdf
[xxiv] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance
[xxv] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance
[xxvi] As required to be prepared and published by the Secretary of State under section 80 of the Environment Act 1995.
[xxvii] Clean Air Strategy 2019 (Defra, 2019) at pp. 71 & 72.
[xxviii] See the Government's response to the Urea Consultation (Defra, 2022) at p. 14.
[xxix] Id. at p. 11.
[xxx] Id.