

Regulatory measures to tackle agricultural pollution to be introduced

The regulations will come into force in January 2020 with transitional periods for some elements to allow farmers time to adapt and ensure compliance.

The regulations will include the following measures:

- nutrient management planning
- sustainable fertiliser applications linked to the requirement of the crop
- protection of water from pollution related to when, where and how fertilisers are spread
- manure storage standards.

There are already reports of poor practices being carried out in unsuitable weather conditions this winter, with the number of incidents this year already exceeding last year.

Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths said:

“Last year, I outlined my intention to introduce a whole Wales approach to tackling nitrate pollution. This year, we have seen an increase in the number of major polluting incidents, damaging both the environment and reputation of the agricultural industry. Equally damaging, in the context of Brexit, is the impact such incidents have on the work underway on Sustainable Brand Values for Welsh Products.

“As winter approaches, I am receiving reports of further incidents and of slurry spreading being carried out in unsuitable weather conditions. Not all slurry spreading is bad, but it must be done legally to avoid such destructive consequences.

“This poor practice is leaving many stretches of rivers devoid of fish. Our rural communities, which depend on tourism, angling and food industries, must be protected.

“I have carefully considered the need to balance regulatory measures, voluntary initiative and investment to address agricultural pollution.

“In the long-term, we will develop a regulatory baseline, informed by responses to the Brexit and our Land consultation. But in the short term, we must take action now to deal with these unacceptable levels of agricultural pollution.

“That is why I am today confirming I will introduce regulations next spring across Wales to tackle the issue. The regulations will replicate good practice which many farms are already implementing routinely – this must become the norm.

“The regulations will enable firm and consistent enforcement to be taken. The regulations will also ensure there are no barriers to trade of agricultural produce with the European Union following Brexit and help us meet national and international obligations on water quality.

“This is the right thing to do – for the environment, for the economy and for the reputation of farming in Wales.”