



Environment
Agency

Key actions for farmers

Resource efficiency and waste

Guidance on purpose and use

The aim of this document is to present a clear set of messages and actions that farmers can take to manage their environmental impact, covering 3 themes:

1. Manage resources sustainably (reduce, reuse and then recycle)
2. Manage waste well (clean, separate and store for collection)
3. Protect livelihoods (soil, water, crops, livestock welfare)

These messages are a collation of existing regulatory requirements and good practice and do not supersede other rules such as the Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) Regulations (SSAFO) and the Farming Rules for Water.

Benefit to farmers

- Increase profitability by reducing inputs and minimising waste
- Reduce and manage business risks through compliance
- Meet funding requirements or access specific grants and loans
- Address concerns about plastic pollution
- Demonstrate your contribution to combating climate change
- Leave a legacy by planning for the future of the farm
- Enhance credibility with customers, retailers and the local community

Benefits to the environment

- Improve and protect soil health
- Facilitate clean and plentiful water
- Reduce your farm's carbon footprint
- Decrease dangers to livestock and wildlife.
- Prevent plastics escaping into the environment

Actions

The actions listed are not exhaustive. They are a mix of:

- regulatory requirements
- requirements if receiving farm payments
- good practice farmers should consider for their business

The suitability of some actions depends on the local situation.

Actions in **bold** are minimum legal requirements.

Access to advice and support

Hyperlinks provide access to further advice and support.

Report pollution incidents to the 24 hour incident hotline: 0800 807060.

Environment Agency National Customer Contact Centre: 03708 506506.

Local officers can provide advice and assist you with decision making.

The latest guidance can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Manage your resources sustainably

Reduce, reuse and then recycle

Benefit to the farmer	Effect on the environment
Reducing and reusing materials saves money.	Minimising waste ensures materials are retained as valuable resources within the environment.
Effective use of farm organic wastes reduces manufactured fertiliser costs.	Spreading animal wastes to land increases nutrient and water retention.
Use of more sustainable materials can help meet customers' and/or accreditation schemes sustainability requirements.	Keeping resources in use for longer reduces potential impacts to soil, air and water.
Reducing resource consumption, such as non-renewable energy and oil based plastics, provides an opportunity to enhance your reputation with your local community and retailers.	Reducing the quantity of products used, particularly those that are oil based, reduces carbon emissions from production and disposal.

Actions	Access to advice and support
<p>Explore the ways you can reduce and reuse materials on the farm.</p> <p>Only buy what you need. This will reduce packaging waste and loss from spoilage.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – applying the waste hierarchy www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-the-waste-hierarchy</p> <p>Gov.uk – save money by reducing waste www.gov.uk/government/publications/saving-money-by-reducing-waste-a-practical-guide-for-farmers-and-growers</p>
<p>Request reusable, refillable or recyclable packaging.</p> <p>Buy products made from recycled materials.</p> <p>Re-use and re-purpose equipment.</p>	<p>Contact your supplier to discuss refillable containers, lower impact products (such as those made from recycled materials) and packaging (that can be recycled), and delivery options.</p>
<p>Adopt an Integrated Farm Management approach.</p>	<p>Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) www.leafuk.org/farming/integrated-farm-management</p>
<p>Consider sowing soil-enriching cover crops over winter, as an alternative to plastic mulch.</p>	<p>Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Cover Crops www.ahdb.org.uk/cover-crops</p>

Actions	Access to advice and support
<p>Straw, shredded wood and other natural products could be used as mulch. Using waste as a mulch or as another benefit to the land may require an exemption.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – exemptions and permits www.gov.uk/guidance/register-your-waste-exemptions-environmental-permits</p>
<p>Consider joining a farm assurance scheme to provide you with a management framework and guidance.</p>	<p>LEAF Marque www.leafuk.org/farming/leaf-marque/leaf-marque-standard</p> <p>Red Tractor www.assurance.redtractor.org.uk/</p> <p>Soil Association www.soilassociation.org/certification/</p> <p>Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Assured www.business.rspcaassured.org.uk/</p>
<p>Carry out a water audit.</p> <p>Manage water more efficiently through good practice irrigation techniques, such as scheduling and applying at night.</p> <p>Plan for risks to your business including drought by managing your abstraction licence and looking at alternative sources of water, for example, a winter storage reservoir or rainwater harvesting.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – water abstraction www.gov.uk/guidance/water-abstraction-flexible-options-in-exceptional-dry-weather</p> <p>UK Irrigation Association www.ukia.org/irrigationbooklets</p> <p>D-Risk planning tool to manage irrigation, abstraction and drought risks www.d-risk.eu/index.php?params=about</p> <p>Gov.uk – rainwater harvesting www.gov.uk/government/publications/rainwater-harvesting-regulatory-position-statement/rainwater-harvesting-regulatory-position-statement</p>
<p>Enhance infiltration and water retention by reducing compaction of your soils. This reduces the need for plastic irrigation pipes.</p>	<p>AHDB – Great Soils www.ahdb.org.uk/greatsoils</p> <p>Soil Association – Save Our Soils www.soilassociation.org/media/4672/7-ways-to-save-our-soils-2016.pdf</p>
<p>You must take steps to prevent manure, fertiliser and soil getting into watercourses.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – Farming rules for water www.gov.uk/guidance/rules-for-farmers-and-land-managers-to-prevent-water-pollution</p>

Actions	Access to advice and support
<p>Use the AHDB Nutrient Management Guide RB209 to work out the nutrients your soil or crop needs.</p> <p>If applying manure or fertiliser to cultivated agricultural land, you must plan by using the results of soil tests.</p>	<p>AHDB - Nutrient Management Guide www.ahdb.org.uk/nutrient-management-guide-rb209</p> <p>Tried and Tested Nutrient Management Plan www.nutrientmanagement.org/what-we-do/tools/new-to-nutrient-management-updated-2019/</p>
<p>Access the latest technical information on energy saving techniques and technologies to cut use and cost.</p>	<p>AHDB – energy saving www.ahdb.org.uk/growsave</p>
<p>Find out if you can apply for a rural grant or payment.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – rural grants and payments www.gov.uk/topic/farming-food-grants-payments/rural-grants-payments</p>

Manage your waste well

Clean, separate and store for collection

Benefit to the farmer	Effect on the environment
Effective management of resources reduces costs of purchasing inputs, waste collection and disposal.	Wasted materials are a loss of valuable non-renewable resources including the energy and water in their manufacture, distribution and disposal.
Good waste management helps you meet legal requirements (minimising risk of penalties), conserves the environment (for future generations) and protects your reputation (increases business opportunities).	Duty of care ensures the right waste ends up in the right place and assigns responsibility for protecting the environment and health.
Waste escaping into the environment can increase flood risk which can lead to a loss of revenue.	Blockages in water courses can endanger wildlife and result in flooding.
Keeping your waste tidy and stored securely is one of the ways to discourage fly-tipping on your land.	Minimising waste left on your land protects soil health, livestock and wildlife.

Actions	Access to advice and support
<p>You must store waste materials securely.</p> <p>Keep waste materials clean and dry to retain value for reuse, repair or recycling.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – sorting storing waste www.gov.uk/managing-your-waste-an-overview/sorting-storing-waste</p>
<p>Waste, apart from slurry and manure, is considered to be controlled waste and therefore subject to duty of care controls.</p> <p>Ensure you correctly describe your waste, the person collecting your waste is registered and you check that they are taking it to a registered facility.</p>	<p>Right waste, right place campaign www.rightwasterightplace.com</p> <p>Gov.uk - duty of care www.gov.uk/government/publications/waste-duty-of-care-code-of-practice/waste-duty-of-care-code-of-practice</p>
<p>You must identify and classify your waste, using a waste classification code, before you send it for recycling or disposal.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – how to classify your waste www.gov.uk/how-to-classify-different-types-of-waste</p>

Actions	Access to advice and support
<p>Keep clear accurate records for at least 2 years, including waste transfer notes describing what has been moved, dated and signed by you and the waste carrier.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – waste transfer notes www.gov.uk/managing-your-waste-an-overview/waste-transfer-notes</p>
<p>Ensure all hazardous wastes moved from site follow the consignment note procedure and that the records are kept on site for three years.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – disposing of hazardous waste www.gov.uk/dispose-hazardous-waste</p> <p>Gov.uk – consignment note www.gov.uk/guidance/hazardous-waste-consignment-note-supplementary-guidance</p>
<p>Hazardous wastes of different types stored on site must be segregated and not mixed with other wastes or materials.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – hazardous waste segregation www.gov.uk/guidance/hazardous-waste-segregation-and-mixing</p>
<p>Only use registered waste carriers to collect your waste. It is your legal duty to ensure your waste carrier is authorised to take your waste and that the waste goes to an authorised site.</p>	<p>Environment Agency waste carriers, brokers and dealers database www.environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers</p>
<p>If you import waste to your farm/site you need to register the correct exemption for that waste or apply for a permit.</p> <p>Waste that you produce as part of your business activities is subject to non-waste framework exemptions which you don't need to register.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – how to register waste exemptions www.gov.uk/guidance/register-your-waste-exemptions-environmental-permits</p> <p>Gov.uk – storing waste www.gov.uk/government/collections/waste-exemptions-storing-waste</p>
<p>You must register (no charge) with the Environment Agency as a lower-tier waste carrier if you regularly deliver your own waste to an authorised collection site.</p>	<p>Gov.uk - waste carrier or broker registration www.gov.uk/waste-carrier-or-broker-registration</p>
<p>Recycle plastic silage wrap and sheeting through a farm plastic recycling scheme.</p>	<p>Search online for 'farm recycling scheme' or check with your local supplier and/or farm store.</p>

Actions	Access to advice and support
<p>Remove waste materials from your land, gateways, and hedges as soon as possible and store securely.</p> <p>Report hazardous waste and large scale illegal dumping to the Environment Agency.</p> <p>Report small scale fly-tipping incidents to the Local Authority on public land.</p> <p>Landowners are responsible for waste on private land.</p>	<p>National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group www.tacklingflytipping.com/landowners/1500</p> <p>Gov.uk: report fly-tipping www.gov.uk/report-flytipping</p> <p>Contact the Environment Agency 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, on 0800 807060</p> <p>Send information anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or online www.crimestoppers-uk.org</p>

Protect your livelihood

Soil, water, crops, and livestock

Benefit to the farmer	Effect on the environment
<p>It is cheaper to avoid soil damage than rectifying it afterwards.</p> <p>Accurate soil testing avoids application of manufactured fertiliser.</p>	<p>Contaminants, such as plastics, have the potential to affect soil health.</p>
<p>Well managed soils decrease fuel, labour and machinery costs for cultivations, and reduce watercourse maintenance costs.</p>	<p>Poorly managed compacted soils can increase run-off, strip productive topsoil and can prevent rainfall from replenishing groundwater resources.</p>
<p>Spreading recovered organic materials to land improves soil nutrients and reduces your manufactured fertiliser costs.</p>	<p>Spreading recovered organic materials to land increases soil carbon and improves soil health contributing to better retention of water and nutrients.</p>
<p>Visible contaminants in materials spread to land may cause issues with farm assurance schemes and supermarket audits</p>	<p>Contaminants have the potential to build up in soils and/or be washed into the environment.</p>
<p>Optimising the use of expensive chemicals saves money.</p>	<p>Poor storage, use and disposal of pesticides can cause major pollution of the environment, drinking water supplies and harm wildlife.</p>

Actions	Access to advice and support
<p>Prevent contamination. Only certain wastes can be spread to land for agricultural benefit. You must have an exemption, or environmental permit to operate mobile plant for land spreading, and comply with the conditions.</p>	<p>National Farmers' Union (NFU) www.nfuonline.com/nfu-online/science-and-environment/waste/waste-volumes-and-typesfinal-version-2/</p> <p>Gov.uk – sewage sludge code of practice www.gov.uk/government/publications/sewage-sludge-in-agriculture-code-of-practice</p> <p>Gov.uk – exemptions for using waste www.gov.uk/government/collections/waste-exemptions-using-waste</p>

Actions	Access to advice and support
	<p>Gov.uk – mobile plant for land spreading www.gov.uk/government/collections/standard-rules-environmental-permitting#mobile-plant-for-land-spreading-or-treatment</p>
<p>Check the quality of composts, anaerobic digestate and other materials before they're spread to your land. There should be no visible plastic or other physical contaminants.</p> <p>The Quality Protocols for Compost and Anaerobic Digestate are being reviewed. Please check Gov.uk for the latest guidance.</p>	<p>NFU www.nfuonline.com/cross-sector/environment/waste/waste-news/landspreading-waste-checklist/</p> <p>Cl:aire Definition of Waste Code of Practice www.claire.co.uk/projects-and-initiatives/dow-cop</p> <p>Gov.uk – quality protocols www.gov.uk/government/collections/quality-protocols-end-of-waste-frameworks-for-waste-derived-products</p>
<p>Order sufficient product to fulfil the specific task therefore minimising pesticide waste.</p> <p>Follow best practice for container rinsing. Residues must not be tipped down the drain.</p> <p>Apply for a groundwater permit to dispose of sprayer washings. Any disposal of pesticides to ground require a permit.</p> <p>The residues cannot be bulked up due to the ban on mixing different kinds of hazardous waste.</p> <p>Ensure safe and legal disposal of animal medicine containers.</p> <p>Pesticides may become restricted over time for use in agriculture and disposal of these will need to follow manufacturing guidelines.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – Health and Safety Executive (HSE) pesticides register www.secure.pesticides.gov.uk/pestreg/</p> <p>Gov.uk – HSE code of practice www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/using-pesticides/codes-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-using-plant-protection-products.htm</p> <p>Gov.uk – hazardous waste disposal www.gov.uk/dispose-hazardous-waste</p>
<p>Ensure waste materials used for animal bedding are appropriate and uncontaminated and you have a relevant permit or exemption registered.</p>	<p>Gov.uk – waste for a specific purpose www.gov.uk/guidance/waste-exemption-u8-using-waste-for-a-specified-purpose</p>

Actions	Access to advice and support
<p>Research alternatives to plastic enrichment toys for livestock and take steps to prevent them getting into animal wastes and being spread to soils.</p>	<p>Explore toys made from renewable resources. www.ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/environmental-enrichment-for-pigs</p>
<p>Complete an Integrated Pest Management plan to identify and manage pesticide risks on your farm.</p>	<p>Voluntary Initiative www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/schemes/integrated-pest-management/ BASIS Registration www.basis-reg.co.uk/</p>