

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Water Targets Expert Advisory Group: Agriculture Target

Meeting notes, Thursday 29 July 2021, 09:35-11:30 on MS Teams

Defra and Environment Agency (EA) attendees

Expert Attendees: Kevin Hiscock, Penny Johnes (Chair)

1) Defra Presentation

Defra presented on the proposed metric for the water agriculture target.

2) Discussion

Discussion between Defra and members of the Water Expert Advisory Group, focussed on the following topics:

- The use of modelling to estimate different pollutant and sediment loads.
- The need to ensure that total nitrogen and total phosphorus fluxes are captured in any relevant model, and not just inorganic nutrient fractions.
- The need for additional work to allow modelling (specifically FARMSCOOPER) to predict total nitrogen (not just nitrate fluxes) to ensure livestock farming and organic fertiliser impacts and nutrient fluxes are properly captured.
- Exploration of whether the target should focus on a percentage load reduction or an absolute threshold for total nitrogen and total phosphorus concentrations in water bodies.
- The need for sampling locations at priority sites of sufficient frequency over the longer term to assess target progress at the catchment and national scale.
- The need to fund monitoring programmes that are holistic and fit for purpose, to robustly assess progress in reducing nitrogen and phosphorus fluxes from agriculture to water.

A summary of the advice and discussion from the Water Expert Advisory Group has been incorporated into the Detailed Evidence Report which accompanies our Environment Act 2021: environmental targets.