



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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## **WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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**TITLE**            **Update on the Review of the Control of Agricultural Pollutions Regulations**

**DATE**            **08 October 2025**

**BY**                **Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs**

The independently chaired Review of the Control of Agricultural Pollution Regulations (CoAP Regulations) was completed in March this year. On 31 March, I announced my intention to take forward all 23 recommendations in full and at pace. We must clean up our rivers and coastal waters.

There is a role for government, water companies, farmers, environmental organisations, supply chains and many others. We need to go further than we have before, challenge each other more than we have before, and we need to move quickly to make real improvements. The Water Summit, held on 25 September, focussed specifically on agriculture. The implementation of the recommendations resulting from the review is a key component of this work and I want to update the Senedd on progress.

### Stakeholder engagement and process

Due to the complex and technical nature of the recommendations and the importance of a collaborative approach, I will be using the experience gained from the SFS stakeholder engagement process to inform the way forward. I have asked my officials to establish a new task and finish group to engage on the recommendations and inform the development of proposals. We will shortly be issuing a call for expressions of interest.

Final decisions will be for Welsh Ministers. However, given the importance of this work to a range of stakeholders, I will make sure the SFS Ministerial Roundtable and the eNGO roundtable are sighted on progress. Furthermore, any proposals for substantive changes to the regulations will require formal consultation and will need to be underpinned by the necessary Impact Assessments.

To underpin this work, officials are drafting technical specifications for work to be carried out by contractors with scientific and agronomic expertise. The specifications include

exploratory work on key recommendations, including alternatives to the closed periods and the 170kg limit and soil protection measures. The Welsh Government is engaging with the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) - a neutral, independent and not-for-profit body - on its review of industry guidance on best practice in relation to slurry storage for designers, contractors and agricultural operators to inform future slurry storage designs.

### Cross compliance and enforcement

The Welsh Government has committed £1.58m for NRW's enforcement of the Regulations in the 2025-26 financial year, which targets high-risk agricultural activities. Officials are reviewing the cross-compliance process with the intention to ensure farms are not penalised where they have taken the appropriate steps to mitigate the risks of pollution in challenging circumstances and a breach of cross compliance is as a result of being under TB restrictions. I am keen for the task and finish group to explore this issue early and to develop a sustainable and long-term solution.

As a reminder, where non-compliance with the Regulations has occurred, my officials and NRW are also able to consider any unforeseen Exceptional Circumstances which may have resulted in a breach of Cross Compliance. Where farmers consider that any non-compliance is due to unforeseen matters beyond their control, circumstances can be considered on a case-by-case basis, this could include being under TB restrictions.

I have also instructed officials to carry forward the changes within the Cross Compliance Verifiable Standards introduced in October 2024, in respect of silage and slurry storage and field sites. This change enabled a more proportionate approach to penalties and will remain in place until regulatory change in this area has been explored.

The review concluded that consideration should be given to provide an appropriate and proportionate enforcement mechanism, through the application of civil sanctions. Independently from the review of the CoAP Regulations, as part of the proposals resulting from the Agriculture (Wales) White Paper, we have been exploring the potential for a more flexible and proportionate enforcement approach through civil sanctions. Subject to the outcome of consultation, the inclusion of civil sanctions will continue to be considered in respect of further changes to the CoAP Regulations.