

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative
2008 – 2015
March 2008

Background

The England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative¹ (ECSFDI) is expected to cover the period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2015, with a total budget of about £8.0 million per year. It is an extension of an initial programme that ran from April 2006 to March 2008.

The Initiative currently focuses on forty priority catchments (listed in Annex A) which were identified, after technical assessment, by the Environment Agency (as competent authority for the Water Framework Directive (WFD)) and English Nature. These catchments are subject to change and, over the life of the Initiative, new catchments may be added and some removed as a result of further technical assessment. The ECSFDI is funded by Defra and is delivered by Natural England and the Environment Agency working in partnership.

The aim of the ECSFDI is to raise awareness of diffuse water pollution from agriculture (DWPA), and to encourage early voluntary action by farmers to tackle DWPA. Delivery is focused on, but not restricted to, the ECSFDI priority catchments.

The Initiative will contribute to the achievement of domestic and international environmental targets, in particular the 2010 target for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and, from the end of 2009, the Programmes of Measures required under the WFD to tackle diffuse pollution from agriculture.

In the UK it is estimated that 60% of the nitrogen load in surface waters comes from agriculture (WRc, 2004) and about 25% of the phosphorous (White and Hammond, 2006). Everyday activities such as the tillage and ploughing of the land, the spreading of slurries and farmyard manure, use of pesticides, veterinary medicines and fertilisers can all give rise to the inadvertent contamination of water supplies.

In 2003, English Nature estimated that around 3% of SSSIs (by area) were in unfavourable condition due to diffuse water pollution. For specific habitats like rivers and lakes (which account for a small % of total SSSI area), the figures are high: 69% of SSSI rivers and 31% of SSSI lakes were reported to be in unfavourable condition due to significant point and / or diffuse pollution. 169 SSSIs fall within the 40 priority catchments currently covered by the ECSFDI.

¹ The State aid application for the ECSFDI advice programme can be found at:
www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf/grants/state-aid.htm

The ECSFDI will be delivered by Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers² (CSFOs) located within the priority catchments, and by other technical advisors.

What will the Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers (CSFOs) do?

The role of CSFOs, (which have been recruited in a fair and open process) is to co-ordinate and facilitate local action and the activities of Catchment Steering Groups in the priority catchments. CSFOs will organise workshops, seminars, farm demonstrations, and other extension activities to raise awareness and share technical knowledge. They will be responsible for a programme of farm visits to selected farms in the catchment and will have an important role to play in catchment appraisal, data collation and communications activity. CSFOs will be expected to encourage take up of agri-environment schemes, such as Environmental Stewardship which comes under the Rural Development Plan for England (RDPE). Water is one of the strategic objectives of Axis 2 measures under the Rural Development Regulation, which includes the RDPE.

Who is eligible?

While the focus for ECSFDI advice delivery is farmers within the priority catchments, some advice will also be delivered outside of the catchments (for example, by ECSFDI Associate projects).

To be eligible, farmers must comply with the following criteria:

1. For advice that is targeted to the priority catchments, manage an agricultural holding / business within a priority catchment. Maps of the catchment boundaries can be found on the MAGIC website:
<http://www.magic.gov.uk/website/magic/opener.htm?startTopic=magicall&chosenLayers=csfdiIndex&xygridref=371596,328375&startScale=700000>
2. The farm business must be classified as a small or medium sized enterprise (SME) in line with Annex 1 of Commission Regulation 70/2001 (as amended). In summary, a SME:
 - has fewer than 250 employees;
 - has either an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million euros, or a balance sheet total not exceeding 43 million euros and is independent;
 - the criteria must be applied to the company as a whole (including subsidiaries located in other Member States and outside the EU).

The advice given to farmers under the Initiative is being made available in accordance with Article 15 of Commission Regulation (EC) 1857/2006 which governs the granting of 'technical support' aid to agricultural businesses.

² For contact details see www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf under "Catchments" and "CSF Officers".

Participants will need to agree to provide information to enable evaluation of the Initiative. Information will be sought to gauge farmer attitudes to CSF, the implications of CSF measures for farm businesses and feedback on the delivery of the Initiative (through questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, customer care surveys etc). The information will be useful in designing future related initiatives and measures.

There will be a communications plan and publicity campaign to make farmers in targeted areas aware of the Initiative. Farmers in the priority catchments do not have to apply to participate as CSFOs will contact them either directly or via leaflets, flyers, postcards etc. to arrange 1:1 visits and invite them to workshops, farm walks and demonstrations. Farmers will also be able to sign up for local events and visits through the advice page on the ECSFDI website at www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf without contacting their local CSFO if they wish, although we wish to encourage contact between CSFOs and farmers.

What does the ECSFDI mean for farmers?

The ECSFDI is based on a voluntary principle. Farmers will choose to engage with CSFOs and be involved in catchment steering groups; attend farm demonstrations and workshops; accept that their farms be visited; decide whether to change their practices and behaviours; and provide information for any monitoring and evaluation activity.

The current 40 priority catchments cover a total area of 40,964 sq km, about 40% of England agricultural area. We estimate that there are about 50,000 farms of over five hectares in area within these catchments.

There are three elements to the advice programme:

Firstly, generic advice will be made available to all farms in the priority catchments, through publicity, communications and dissemination activity etc.

Secondly, we will make available a range of workshops, seminars and farm demonstrations on catchment sensitive farming issues. These elements of the Initiative will be available to all farmers who wish to take advantage of them i.e. there will be no selection. Entry to these events will be on a first come, first served basis. If demand should at any time exceed the capacity of the chosen venue, extra events will be scheduled as soon as possible. Information regarding when and where these events will take place will be available through local publicity by CSFOs and other stakeholders (NFU, RSPB etc) and on the ECSFDI website www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf.

Thirdly, farm visits from an expert in catchment sensitive farming will be made available. The purpose of the farm visits will be to raise awareness of DWPA, identify risks and pathways for DWPA on the farm and discuss and promote changes in farming practices. Technical advice will be given in the areas of:

- land use
- soil management
- manure management
- protection of watercourses
- livestock management
- crop protection
- nutrient management

We have estimated that farm visits will be worth about £1,000 per farm (although they will be free of charge to farmers) and between 5% and 10% of farms will be visited in priority catchments. It is likely that as a result of a farm visit, farmers will be asked to consider some changes to their farming practices.

Farmers interested in receiving a visit should register with their local CSFO (contact details are available on the ECSFDI website).

Not all farmers who register with their local CSFO will receive a visit. CSFOs will use local catchment appraisals and intelligence to help target the visits to those farms where there is greater risk of diffuse pollution and less evidence of farmers taking steps to mitigate this risk. The criteria will be:

- farms involved in pollution incidents
- farms with high connectivity to sensitive waterbodies
- farms with high inherent risks – from slope, rainfall, soils, land use etc
- farms with little or no Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) /Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) take-up
- farms not already receiving attention from other bodies like water companies, RSPB, National Trust, Rivers Trusts etc.

All visits are voluntary, meaning that CSFOs and contractors will only conduct a visit with the consent of the farmer.

Beneficiaries will not be able to choose the service provider. The service providers will be Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers (functionally managed by Natural England) and contractors (contracted by Natural England or the Environment Agency).

Annex B summarises the behaviours and practices that the ECSFDI is aimed at bringing about on farms. Some of these are consistent with good agricultural practice, but others go beyond this and will entail costs for farmers. That is why CSFOs will be encouraging farmers to take up relevant options of agri-environment schemes, in particular Environmental Stewardship.

How will success of this Initiative be evaluated?

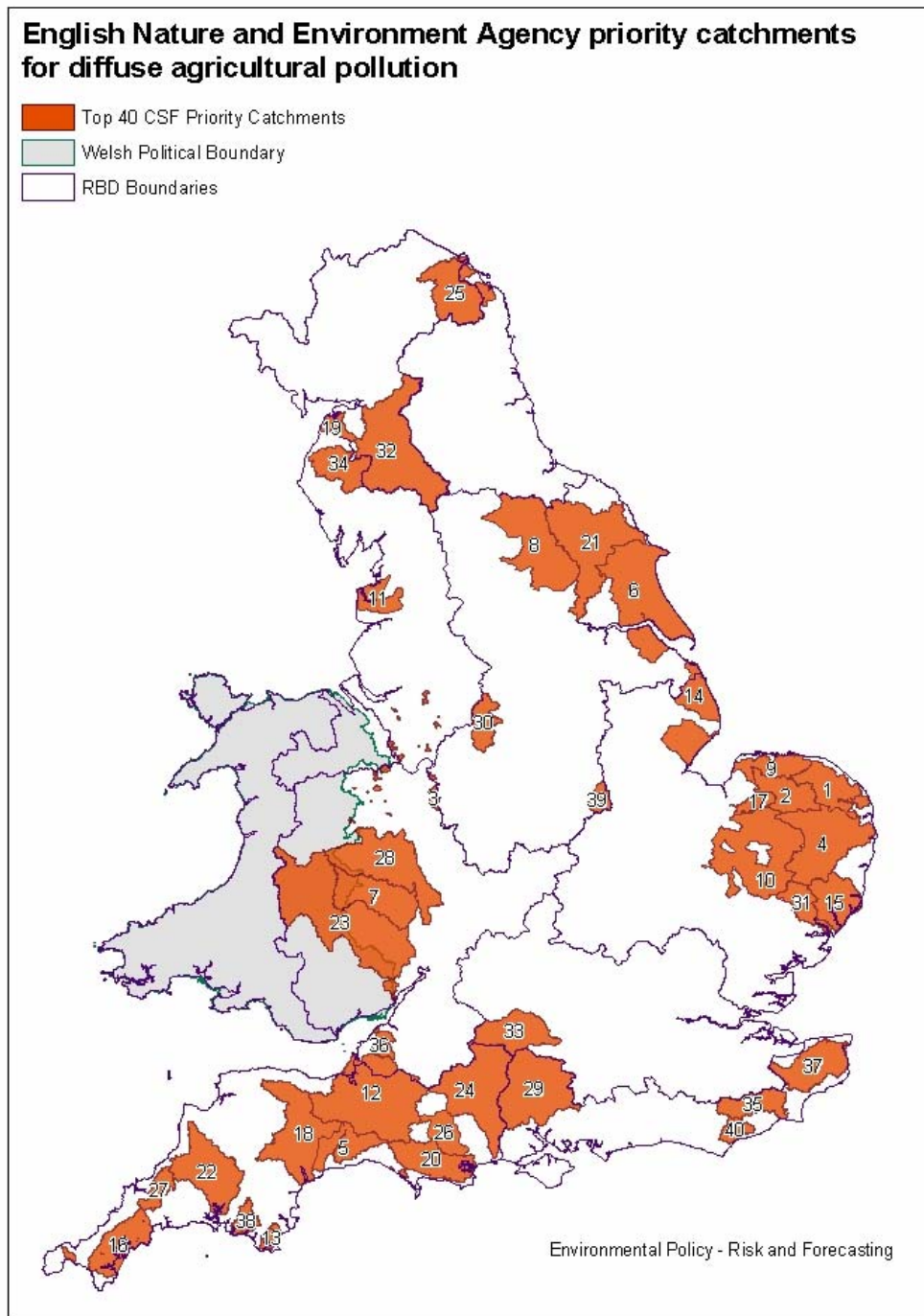
There will be three levels of evaluation:

- the process of engagement with farmers and other stakeholders, e.g. numbers of workshops, farm visits and demonstrations; technical & advisory material made available; partnership working with other stakeholders
- changes in farmer attitudes, behaviours and practices including take up of agri-environment schemes
- changes in water quality.

Closing date

The Initiative will end on 31 March 2015, or earlier if funding ceases before this date.

Annex A: ECSFDI Priority catchments 2008/09³



³ These catchments are subject to change throughout the life of the Initiative. To determine if a farm is within a priority catchment see <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf/catchments/priority/index.htm>

Anglia River Basin District (RBD) catchments

Catchment Identifier	Catchment Name
1	Bure Ant and Muckfleet
2	River Wensum
4a	Yare
4b	Waveney
9	North Norfolk Rivers
10	Little Ouse (Thetford area)
14	Lincolnshire Coast Rivers
15	Deben, Alde and Ore
17	River Nar
31	Gipping and Orwell

Humber RBD catchments

6	East Riding of Yorkshire and North Lincs
8	Yorkshire Ouse, Nidd and Swale
21	Yorkshire Derwent
30	Peak District Dales
39	River Eye

North West RBD catchments

11	River Wyre
34	Bassenthwaite Lake

Solway and Tweed RBD catchments

19	River Waver and Biglands Bog
25	Tweed Catchment Rivers (England only)
32	River Eden and Tributaries

Severn RBD catchments

3	West Midlands Meres
7	River Lugg (England only)
23	River Wye (England only)
28	River Teme (England only)
36	North Somerset Moors

South East RBD catchments

29a	Rivers Test
29b	Rivers Itchen
35	Eastern Rother
37	The Stour
40	Pevensey

South West RBD catchments

5	Rivers Axe and Otter
12	Somerset Levels and Moors
13	Slapton Ley, Salcombe to Kingsbridge
16	West Cornwall Catchments
18	Exe Estuary
20	The Frome, The Fleet, part of Poole Harbour

22	Tamar - Tavy Estuary
24	Hampshire Avon System
26	Dorset Stour (Middle Reaches)
27	River Camel Valley and Tributaries
38	Yealm and Erme Estuaries

Thames RBD catchments

33	Rivers Lambourne and Kennet
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Annex B: Catchment sensitive farming behaviours and practices

Land use / soil management

- convert arable land to grassland
- adopt recognised soil management plan
- establish autumn cover crops
- cultivate in spring rather than autumn
- adopt minimal cultivation systems
- check for and deal with sub-surface capping and compaction
- cultivate and drill across the slope and along contours
- avoid winter tramlines
- leave autumn seedbeds rough
- establish in-field grass buffer strips
- reduce field size with new hedges and beetle banks
- introduce grass leys into arable rotations
- avoid high-risk crops on high-risk fields.
- use forestry and set aside schemes to good effect

Manure management

- adopt recognised manure management plan
- export surplus manure
- adopt batch storage of slurry and of solid manure
- compost solid manure
- change from slurry to solid manure handling system
- site solid manure heaps away from watercourses and field drains
- site solid manure heaps on concrete and collect the effluent
- do not apply manure to high risk areas
- do not spread manure or slurry to fields at high-risk times
- incorporate into soil quickly or inject
- test manure spreaders

Protecting watercourses

- establish riparian buffer strips
- trap silt and sediment
- fence watercourses
- provide livestock fording/crossing points

Livestock management

- reduce stocking densities
- reduce grazing intensity
- avoid poaching
- move feeders and troughs at regular intervals
- reduce nitrogen (N) and phosphorous (P) in livestock diets
- provide access to drinking water through pasture pumps and troughs

Crop protection

- adopt recognised crop protection management plan
- test sprayers
- use registered operators
- spray under optimum conditions
- handle and dispose of pesticides responsibly

Nutrient management

- adopt nutrient management plan
- use recognised fertiliser recommendation system
- test soils
- keep records of applications
- seek advice from agronomists
- integrate fertiliser and manure supply
- reduce fertiliser application rates
- do not apply P fertilisers to high P index soils
- do not apply fertiliser to high risk areas
- avoid spreading fertilisers at high risk times

Other

- adopt phase feeding of livestock
- maintain and enhance soil organic matter levels
- incinerate poultry litter
- relocate gates
- provide adequate slurry and manure storage
- separate clean from dirty water
- manage / treat dirty water
- allow field drainage to deteriorate
- establish wetlands

