

New fertiliser regulations to back British farmers and cut pollution

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New plans aim to support British farmers by improving supply resilience to global market shocks and supporting innovation in the fertiliser sector.

British farmers could benefit from access to new and innovative fertilising products which have the potential to reduce air, land and water pollution under new government proposals launched today (Thursday 19 March).

The consultation and call for evidence set out plans to help support innovation in the fertiliser sector, diversify supply, and strengthen the UK's resilience to global market shocks.

Current fertiliser regulations are widely seen as outdated and could do more to support fertiliser supply resilience and protect the environment, as well as being more agile to enable new products to enter the market. Despite its complexity, the framework has remained largely unchanged for more than 20 years and applies mainly to inorganic mineral fertilisers, limiting its overall scope.

Expanding access to a wider range of fertiliser products and introducing a more flexible legislative framework would help strengthen future fertiliser supply.

The proposals form part of the government's plan to work hand-in-hand with farmers and industry to put more homegrown food on people's plates, grow the economy, and protect the countryside.

The government is actively monitoring developments in the Middle East and the impacts on the food and farming sector, including rising fertiliser prices. It has taken action to support greater price transparency, raising industry concerns with the Competitions and Market Authority (CMA) and asking the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board to report back on fertiliser and red diesel supply and use across agricultural sectors.

The CMA has confirmed it will work with government to identify and monitor sectors likely to be affected by price rises and disruption – including fertilisers – so we can respond swiftly to any evidence of harmful practices across the economy.

The government continues to work with industry and farmers to understand any potential pressures and options to mitigate any immediate risks.

Farming Minister Dame Angela Eagle said:

Farmers work tirelessly to feed the nation, and they deserve a system that keep pace with modern agriculture, supports farm businesses, encourages innovation and cuts pollution.

These proposals would help support innovation in the fertiliser sector, reduce reliance on imports, and support more sustainable farming.

Jo Gilbertson, Agricultural Industries Confederation Sector Head for Fertilisers, said:

This consultation represents an important opportunity to put in place a fertiliser regulatory framework that is fit for the future.

Aligning with a European-style fertilising products model, while tailoring it to UK conditions and co-designing it with industry, should help deliver a system that protects standards, supports innovation, and works in practice for businesses and farmers alike.

The proposed reforms will also embed environmental standards and ensure labelling and marketing rules give end-users confidence that the products they buy are safe and effective.

The new framework is intended to support a more circular economy by increasing the use of recycled nutrients made by alternative technologies, cut pollution to land and water, and create opportunities for innovation and growth in the UK fertiliser sector.

Implementation of the new framework will need to be an iterative process and the call for evidence seeks views and evidence on newer and novel products and materials to inform future policy development, underlining the government's commitment to working in partnership with the sector.

The consultation will run for eight weeks, closing on Wednesday 13 May with responses invited from farmers, manufacturers, environmental groups and the wider industry via GOV.UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-fertiliser-regulations-to-back-british-farmers-and-cut-pollution>