



WRc analysis reveals water quality benefits of Catchment Sensitive Farming

The Need

The Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) Project is a flagship advice scheme in England designed to tackle water pollution from agriculture. With a variety of voluntary and grant-funded measures implemented on farms across the country in order to reduce run-off of pollutants including nitrate, phosphate, sediment and pesticides, measuring the effectiveness of this work is vital so that the CSF Project can be adapted and targeted to achieve maximum impact.

The Solution

Since the inception of CSF in 2006, WRc's Catchment Management team has supported the Environment Agency in determining whether CSF has achieved its objectives of raising farmer awareness, reducing pollution, and improving environmental quality. Using advanced statistical and GIS routines to link mitigation measures in target catchments to changes in chemical concentrations and ecological indices, WRc has demonstrated that actions to reduce water pollution from agriculture can have a positive impact on river water quality and a knock-on benefit for invertebrate life.

The Outcome

These studies have been influential in enabling the Environment Agency to optimise the CSF water quality monitoring programme, secure continued funding for the CSF Project, and inform national policy on rural diffuse pollution. As a result, CSF is now an integral part of Defra's strategy for delivering Countryside Stewardship and meeting Water Framework Directive targets.

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We were very pleased with the support given during the project; the final report was of an excellent standard.

Environment Agency

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