

Circulation: NFU Staff & Members

Date: 22nd November 2019Contact: NFU CallFirst **0370 845 8458**

Flooding & Wet Weather: Advice, Key Asks & Messaging

Impacts of Flooding on Agriculture

Farmers are at the mercy of the weather. The recent wet weather has led to extensive flooding of agricultural land especially in the North East and East Midlands. Nationally, members are experiencing delays in drilling winter crops, harvesting and livestock are being brought in early.

Advice for Members

- The NFU has [initial advice](#) available for dealing with flooding on your land as well as our long-term asks to government.
- To report a flood incident please contact the **Environment Agency's** (EA) incident hotline **0800 80 70 60**. Remember to keep a record of what you report and when. The EA's [Flood recovery advice](#) is available for farmers and staff.
- The NFU lobbied for an extension to the [Farming Recovery Fund](#) which has been granted. It will be available for flood-hit farmers in Northern England. The NFU is working with the RPA to develop the fund including the eligible area and items covered.
- For insurance, [BPS](#) and any **agri-environment schemes** purposes it is important that members start to gather evidence of flood impacts including videos and photographs and land parcels affected. More information on RPA Flooding Advice available [here](#).
- Sign up for the [EA's Flood Warnings](#): the system contacts you when your area is at risk of flooding. The service is free, you can get warnings by phone, email or text message.
- NFU CallFirst: If you are concerned about flooding and issues relating to this, then the NFU can help, contact Call First on **0370 845 8458**.
- Remember your responsibilities if you are a riparian owner. Check out the [NFU's Water Maintenance Solutions guidance pack](#) for more information.

Key Asks

1. Prompt payment of **BPS** in December and expedite any outstanding BPS to flood-affected businesses that month.
2. Prompt processing by RPA of individual **force majeure** claims when flooding has prevented BPS or **agri-environment** scheme compliance and new government Ministers to consider a derogation from **3-crop rule** in flood affected areas.
3. NFU calls on **CRD** and **Defra** understand that Autumn cereal drilling has been disrupted by high rainfall levels and ask that pragmatism is exercised when implementing final dates for sale, supply and use of **revoked active ingredients**.
4. Agricultural supply sector to source and supply additional spring-sown seed to compensate for short autumn drilled area.
5. Pumps to be moved to remove floodwater from farmland after properties have been cleared.

Long-Term Asks

In our [Flooding Manifesto](#) we asked for:

The voice of British farming

Although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, neither the NFU nor the author can accept liability for errors and or omissions. © NFU Policy Services/NFU Briefing/Nov19

NFU supported by

 NFU Mutual



- A **long-term, strategic** and **planned** approach is needed to manage flood and coastal risk in future.
- Decisions should be made at the local level, where they will be better informed and can ensure **collaboration** between all **stakeholders**.
- Decisions should be made on a **catchment** basis and **funding** should follow.
- Better **communications** and engagement on flood risk management.

Messaging

A flood event often temporarily influences the political and media limelight. Blame is often at the forefront of the arguments and debates and the recent events have been no exception. Going forward, what is important is that our messaging, across the country, is consistent. Below are the NFU's key messages on flooding and future flood resilience:

Key messages from Stuart Robert's speech at the ADA conference

- Every flood event is different therefore it is impossible to **compare** one event to another.
- Likewise, every catchment is different: what does or does not work in one catchment may not work in another.
- **Integrated water management**: the NFU's general election manifesto highlights the importance of water as a resource and managing related risks whether from flooding or drought.
- **Maintenance**: lack of maintenance of watercourses and flood defence assets is a constant frustration for members nationally. The EA has powers and not duties to carry out maintenance work but the real issues lies with the cost-benefit analysis which does not adequately value agricultural land.
- **Conveyance** of water is key in lowland areas and the system working efficiently is essential.

Agriculture's role in reducing flood risk

- Farmers across the country already play an active role in reducing flood and coastal management. They maintain thousands of kilometres of rivers and take part in natural flood management schemes. Under permit, farmers can undertake essential river maintenance work themselves, such as bank repairs, dredging and the creation of wildlife habitats. They may do this on their own or as part of 'catchment partnership'.

Natural flood management

- The NFU recognises that natural flood management techniques, in the right location, can have a role, but they are not a solution in themselves to flooding. These include woodland creation, woody debris dams, river re-meandering, soil management techniques, water storage areas in low-lying areas or ditch removal or blocking.
- These measures require further funding and research in order to explore their suitability.

How do farmers help prevent flooding?

- Flood risk management - taking steps to reduce the risk of flooding and managing flood water when flooding does occur – is an essential part of the work farmers do to protect and manage water resources.
- Almost 60% of the UK's most productive agricultural land is situated on floodplains. In the winter of 2013-14 some 45,000 hectares of agricultural land were flooded, at a cost of around £19 million to the sector.
- It is important that if farmland is allowed to flood to protect urban communities downstream that this is done by design rather than default, and that the impacts of food production and the farming business are acknowledged.
- The work that farmers do to prevent flooding, such as desilting and cover cropping, helps increase the resilience of their land, as well as reducing the risk of flooding to local communities.