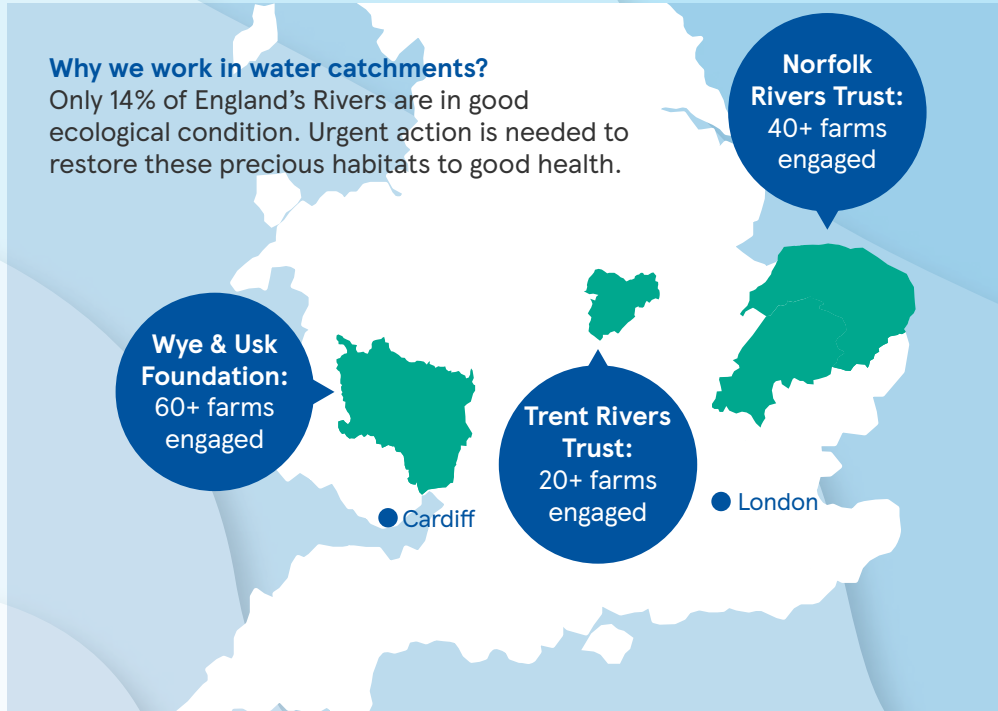


Water stewardship: protecting UK river catchments

Since 2019, the WWF and Tesco Partnership has supported the work of the Norfolk Rivers Trust, Trent Rivers Trust and Wye & Usk Foundation to engage with farmers to tackle agricultural pollution in specific river catchments.

Why we work in water catchments?

Only 14% of England's Rivers are in good ecological condition. Urgent action is needed to restore these precious habitats to good health.



Activities we've helped to support



Undersowing **maize** and sowing **cover crops**



Installing **buffer strips** and tree planting



Delivering **Nature Based Solutions**, such as silt traps



Infrastructural improvements on farms

What we've achieved



130 farms

engaged across three geographies in England and Wales, of which over 90% (121 farms) received at least one advisory visit.



329 million

litres of water replenished (returned to the environment).



6 major suppliers

have enabled the farmer engagement and on-farm pollution reduction actions: Branston, Cranswick, Arla, Muller, Foyles and Noble Foods



40 farms

have undertaken land use improvements across 790ha.

Wider actions to protect UK rivers

To tackle agricultural pollution, we need action from food businesses, regulators and UK Governments particularly in areas already experiencing severe impacts, like the River Wye. For example:

Retailers must ensure robust nutrient management plans are in place and implemented on all supplying farms; this requirement should be embedded within existing certification schemes.

UK governments must ensure policies are in place which support river health, existing regulations are enforced, and regulatory bodies are properly resourced.

Working together



Supporting farmers in improving nutrient management across three UK river catchments through the WWF and Tesco Partnership

Only 14% of England's Rivers are in good ecological condition and urgent action is needed to restore these precious habitats to good health.

Since 2019, the WWF and Tesco Partnership has supported the work of the Norfolk Rivers Trust, Trent Rivers Trust and the Wye and Usk Foundation to engage with farmers in specific river catchments to tackle diffuse agricultural pollution - the leading cause of pollution in England's rivers.

This work has focused on small-scale interventions to improve soil and water management on farms by providing free and impartial farm-level advice, targeting actions that will have the biggest impact in reducing nutrient and sediment run off into waterways at specific farm sites.

Work has included improvements to farming practice - such as undersowing maize and introducing cover crops. It has supported buffer strips, tree planting and Nature Based Solutions, such as silt traps to reduce run off. Additionally, infrastructural improvements on farms have also been delivered.

There is no one-size fits all approach to on-farm action. The most impactful interventions vary depending on the precise geographies of individual farms, the type of production (e.g. dairy, poultry, arable crops), the interplay between farms across any given region, and the economics of individual farm businesses. It's therefore vital that farmers can access bespoke advice at a one-to-one level from trusted and knowledgeable advisers.

Impacts

- **130 farms engaged across three geographies in England and Wales, of which over 90% (121 farms) received at least one advisory visit**, providing bespoke guidance on options to improve nutrient and soil management on site.
- **40 farms undertook land use improvements across 790ha**, including, for example: undersowing maize, sowing cover crops, improving fencing to keep livestock out of watercourses, planting hedges or trees, installing buffer strips, and/or tramline disruption.
- **10 farms installed a total of 18 silt traps or other nature based solutions** to capture run-off and prevent sediment- and nutrient-laden water reaching watercourses.
- **19 farms** in the **Wye and Usk** undertook **improvement works to their yards/farm buildings** to reduce the pollution potential from their farming activities, for example, repairing gutters, covering cattle yards, improving the interface between free-range chicken egg-laying barns and the ranges.
- **In total, 329million litres of water was replenished** (returned to the environment).

This work shows what can be achieved when farmers, advisers, conservationists and retailers work together to support nutrient management on specific farm sites, but localised efforts will simply not be enough to turn the tide for UK rivers.

To tackle the systemic threat of diffuse agricultural pollution, it's essential that we see urgent action from food businesses, regulators and UK Governments, who must go further, faster to address this crisis, particularly in areas already experiencing severe impacts, like the River Wye.

A critical step for retailers is ensuring robust nutrient management plans are in place and implemented on all supplying farms; this requirement should be embedded within existing certification schemes. At the same time, UK Governments must ensure policies are in place which support river health, existing regulations are adequately enforced, and the relevant regulatory bodies are properly resourced.

Working together

TESCO

