

Creating Public Assurance on Nutrient Management

Farmers are responsible stewards of our natural resources. Here is how we plan to demonstrate that to the public.

--- A CFFO Position Statement ---

Preamble:

Farmers take seriously their role as stewards of the earth's natural resources. And they are willing to demonstrate to the public that its interests are being served through farmers' cultivation of crops and livestock.

The CFFO believes that the farm community is capable of providing public assurance regarding water quality without the need for complex and costly government regulations.

In particular, the CFFO believes that Ontario's Nutrient Management Act is heavy-handed, costly and doesn't suit the wide variety of farms across the province. In addition, with the introduction of source water protection legislation, there is little merit for pursuing the application of nutrient management regulations on farms under 300 nutrient units, or for new and expanding farms.

The CFFO believes that the Act needs to be replaced with a fresh piece of legislation that enables farmers to establish a new self-driven process to provide the public with assurance regarding farmers' impact on the environment. Our organization calls it the Agricultural-Environmental Standards of Operation Act.

Principles:

As farmers, we are willing to enshrine the following broad-based principles in the Act and to govern our farming activities accordingly:

1. **Water Testing.** We are willing to test our water regularly. The water we use on our farm is part of a water table that is wide in its geographic scope and is used by many people. By testing water, farmers collectively keep track of water quality and can take remedial actions quickly if needed.
2. **Water Runoff from Barns and Fields.** Runoff from our barns and fields has the potential to impact water quality. We are willing to take proactive action regarding the routing and management of runoff water from both fields and barns.
3. **Keeping Track of What we Do on the Farm.** Farmers regularly add nutrients to the soil that require proper management to ensure an agronomic balance is maintained in the soil. We are willing to keep records of agricultural practices that impact the soil and may affect water quality.

4. **Making sure we do what we agree to doing.** Farmers not only need to make these commitments to the public, they need to follow through on them. Farmers are willing to develop a process within the farming community that tracks its uptake of these principles.

Specific Standards we can agree to:

- Continuing the ban on high-trajectory guns for livestock manure.
- Encourage appropriate testing for well water used for human consumption.
- Manage runoff from all livestock facilities and feed and manure storage to meet locally-accepted “best management practices.”
- Build no nutrient storage facilities within 100 metres of municipal wells.

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Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario*