

Government Response to the Eighth Report from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Session 2004–05, on Progress on the use of Pesticides: the Voluntary Initiative

Defra response	EFRA Committee Query
<p>1 “[The VI Steering Group] is keen to assist with the development of existing, or introduction of new, indicators [on biodiversity]” <i>[Response to Recommendations 2-3]</i></p>	<p>How will Defra follow up the Group’s proposals?</p> <p>Members of the VI Steering Group will be involved in developing appropriate parts of the Action Plans to implement the National Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (commonly called the National Pesticides Strategy), particularly the Biodiversity Action Plan. These discussions will cover the development of relevant indicators. The Pesticides Forum has also suggested that its own Indicators sub-group and that of the VI Steering Group should have some joint discussions.</p>
<p>2 “The evaluation project [to help provide a framework for evaluating the success of the Initiative] has produced some useful tools in its own right but before the tools ... can be given practical application it will first be necessary to have further work done on them to develop them further. This work will be put into the public domain once it has, in line with normal Defra procedures, been through a scientific peer review process” <i>[Response to Recommendation 4]</i></p>	<p>Can Defra tell us when the evaluation work will be available?</p> <p>The evaluation project conducted by Newcastle University has been completed and will shortly be submitted for peer review. We expect that it will be published in the new year.</p>
<p>3 “The Government will ... invite the Voluntary Initiative steering group to approach Defra with a view to exploring the possibility of using some of [Defra’s allocation of] funds [for tackling diffuse water pollution from agriculture] to support the national roll-out of the</p>	<p>Has the invitation been taken up? Is there a timetable for the roll-out of the Initiative’s water catchment projects and what influence does Defra have over the schedule?</p> <p>A VI team met Defra officials</p>

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<p>Initiative's water catchment projects" [Response to Recommendation 7]</p>	<p>responsible for the catchment-sensitive farming delivery initiative, in July and again in October. There is a shared understanding of how the VI might play a part in the priority catchments, by providing technical support in the form of advice, training and information resources. The VI is now talking directly to the Rural Development Service who will be closely involved in engagement with farmers under this initiative.</p> <p>The CSF delivery initiative will be launched from April 2006, which is when Defra funding is available for it. Ministers are keen that this should 'hit the ground running' and the delivery partners involved, in particular the Rural Development Service, English Nature and the Environment Agency, are working hard to achieve this.</p>
<p>4 "Now that the draft strategy has appeared, we believe that it will have a key role in developing policy for sustainable pesticide use for the foreseeable future" [Response to Recommendation 12]</p>	<p>When will the final strategy document be published?</p> <p>Answers to 4,5 and 6</p> <p>The consultation on the draft strategy received over 100 responses, nearly a third of which were received after the end of the consultation period on 30 June. The responses have been analysed to identify common themes, and a revised strategy is being prepared. The aim is to publish the body of the strategy around the end of the year with further developed outline action plans. The action plans will be taken forward in consultation with the stakeholders with expertise in the particular subject areas. The plans will be finalised and implementation will</p>

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	begin in the course of the next year.
<p>5 "It is also likely that a further round of consultations may need to be undertaken for some/all of the action plans as these are taken forward" [<i>Response to Recommendation 13</i>]</p>	<p>What is the timetable for these further consultations?</p>
<p>6 "Progress on finalising and implementing the strategy will be dependent upon the results of the public consultation but the Government will aim to take the various elements forward as quickly as possible." [<i>Response to Recommendation 18</i>]</p>	<p>Can Defra be specific on the timescale for finalising and implementing the strategy?</p>
<p>7 "[Measure to reduce] Diffuse Water Pollution from Non-Agriculture Sources ... currently under development" [<i>Annex</i>]</p>	<p>When will this Measure be implemented?</p> <p>Defra have set up a UK steering group to take forward work on non-agricultural diffuse pollution. One of the aims of this group is to determine a selection of suitable measures to combat the sources of non-agricultural diffuse pollution that are most urgent to address. The first set of measures will be ready for inclusion in the first round of River Basin Management Plans under the Water Framework Directive in 2009.</p> <p>At this stage it is unclear whether this first set of measures will include further restrictions and voluntary schemes to control amenity pesticide use. As with other sectors likely to cause diffuse pollution, we will need to complete evaluation of the effectiveness of measures that are already in place before creating new additional measures or restrictions.</p>