



growers' advice

The Water Framework Directive and how it will impact on potato growers

New legislation and regulations (both European and National) relating to water has and will be introduced over the next few years. The main aim of the legislation is to improve environmental protection via more control over water quantity and water quality to be by 2015. The impact on potato production has been and will be difficult to predict but recent changes include:

- Changes to the process and cost of retaining and applying for abstraction licences
- Onus on the grower to prove that water is needed on farm
- Onus on grower to prove that abstraction does not compromise the local environment
- Abstractions over 20 cubic metres (m³) must be licenced
- New quality standards and limits for eutrophication and pesticide pollution
- River basin plans now introduced for England, Wales and Scotland
- Applications for licence renewals must be made 3 months before the expiry date
- Introduction of Water Protection zones (7 pilot areas being tested)
- Flood management and reservoirs – more risk based approach to safety

There are still opportunities for water abstractors to influence the final impact on their businesses but any decisions need to be justified.

To help ensure continued low cost access to water please follow these steps:

Understand your location – The main drivers for licence availability and renewal will be decided at a local level. The Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS) process in England and Wales and the River Basin Management plans in Scotland will dictate licence renewal. It is essential to be aware of your local situation and of anything that may affect your licence i.e. SSSI's. The Environment Agency (EA) in England and Wales and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) in Scotland are the lead agencies and are keen to minimize the impact of the regulations on businesses. Consequently they are very keen to hear from potato growers to help achieves this.

Environment Agency	www.environment-agency.gov.uk	08708 506506
Scottish Environment Protection Agency	www.sepa.org.uk	01786 457700

Data collection – Growers, processors and agronomists must keep as much data as possible relating to water. This is needed to demonstrate water efficiency and the need for water. Depending on location the information needs to be updated every 1 to 4 years when applying/reapplying for an abstraction licence.

Rain fall records – Keep or have access to rainfall records for your location

Water Audit – Growers need to carry out a water audit (balance sheet of water need against use. A flow meter will need to be attached to your pump)

Water Usage Maps – Growers should produce a farm map showing water sources, water use, water disposal and potential risks.

Irrigator MOT – Irrigation systems should have an MOT once a year as well as having regular calibration checks. This will help reduce variation within the crop specification. **It is thought that up 75% of all rainguns are run inefficiently.**

Collaboration – Producers should form Water abstraction groups (WAGS) to exchange information and to better negotiate with the environment agencies. WAGS have been very successful in the past in representing their members and also spreading the costs of environmental work/ consultants.

Nature Sites – Abstractors need to identify areas within their locality both upstream and downstream that are likely to be covered by the Habitats and Birds Directives and take appropriate action in preventing any damage.

More details of these factors can be obtained from the following sources

Natural England	www.naturalengland.org.uk	08456 003078
Scottish Natural Heritage	www.snh.org.uk	01463 725000
Countryside Council for Wales	www.ccw.gov.uk	08451 306229

For further information please contact Potato Council Technical Executive Chris Steele 02476478779 or email csteele@potato.org.uk