ROTHAMSTED RESEARCH

RESILIENT FARMING FUTURES

CAPABILITY

Resilient Farming Futures

Co-developing a new voluntary code for supporting agroecosystem regulating services

What's the issue?

Woodlands are vital to sustainable land and water management under climate change. Not only do root systems stabilise soil and riverbanks trunks and branches slow flood flows, the trees also help trap and retain water pollutants including nutrients. Woody buffer strips, both in fields and along riparian margins, are therefore useful management interventions.

What did we do?

Our new knowledge of the impacts of extreme wet weather on elevated agricultural pollutant emissions (sediment, N, P) to water, using the North Wyke Farm Platform resulted in input into the development of the new voluntary Woodland Code for Water, which will go to public consultation in all four home nations in the coming months.

This code is being developed through a partnership between Forest Research, the James Hutton Institute, Rothamsted Research, ADAS and policy teams across the four home nations.

Our new data resulted in the inclusion of an additional appraisal step for targeting riparian woodland buffer sites designed to take explicit account of the risks associated with extreme weather events, necessary because the original decision support tool selected by Forest Research is based on mean long-term climate data only.

What else will we do to increase outcomes?

We are continuing to support the final stages of getting the new code ready for the public consultation.

How are we going to monitor the outcomes?

One key metric will be the uptake levels of the new code.