

BECOMING A GOOD WATER STEWARD:

GUIDANCE FOR THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY IN ENGLAND

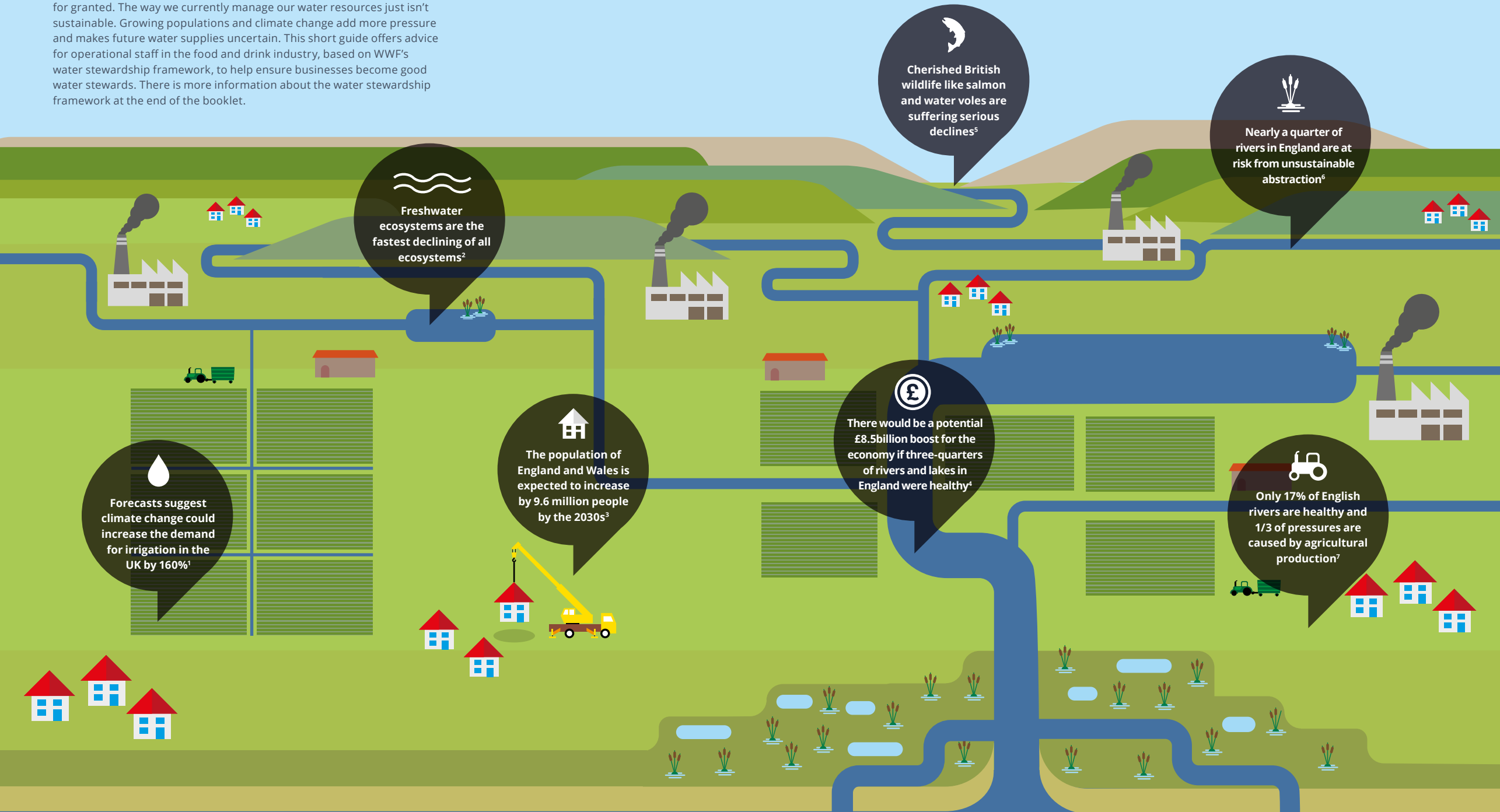


WORKING
TOGETHER TO
CONSERVE AND
PROTECT
ENGLISH RIVERS



OUR FRESHWATER ENVIRONMENT IS AT RISK

Businesses need water – but this is a resource they can no longer take for granted. The way we currently manage our water resources just isn't sustainable. Growing populations and climate change add more pressure and makes future water supplies uncertain. This short guide offers advice for operational staff in the food and drink industry, based on WWF's water stewardship framework, to help ensure businesses become good water stewards. There is more information about the water stewardship framework at the end of the booklet.



Freshwater ecosystems are the fastest declining of all ecosystems²

Cherished British wildlife like salmon and water voles are suffering serious declines⁵

Nearly a quarter of rivers in England are at risk from unsustainable abstraction⁶

Forecasts suggest climate change could increase the demand for irrigation in the UK by 160%¹

The population of England and Wales is expected to increase by 9.6 million people by the 2030s³

There would be a potential £8.5billion boost for the economy if three-quarters of rivers and lakes in England were healthy⁴

Only 17% of English rivers are healthy and 1/3 of pressures are caused by agricultural production⁷



THE BIGGEST IMPACT FROM AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION COMES FROM POLLUTION

PRESSURES

Our freshwater environment faces many challenges, with the most significant pressures coming from agriculture and the water industry. In England, only 17% of all waters are considered healthy – that includes rivers, lakes and coastal waters. Where waters aren't in good health, agriculture is responsible in over a third of cases and the water industry is responsible for a quarter⁸. The impact comes from all farming sectors – mixed farms, horticulture, livestock and arable. But the impact of these actions differs depending on the location.

POLLUTION

Pesticides, nutrients and sediment run off farmland into waterways. This pollution makes it difficult for the ecology to thrive and species to survive.

OVER-ABSTRACTION

Too much water is taken for public supply and irrigation in 15% of rivers, causing flows to fall below sustainable levels. For a further 9%, if all the water that was licenced was taken, it would present a clear risk to the ecology of the river⁹.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Businesses need a healthy freshwater environment to operate. The food and drink sector relies on British agriculture with half of all the food and drink we buy in the UK being grown and produced here. Reducing the impact of UK agriculture on the environment will make a big difference to the sustainability of food and drink supply chains. Currently, in England:

- Soil erosion means there is less soil to grow crops, which affects productivity and profits.
- Water resources are under pressure, with reliable sources not available for new business needs across much of the country.
- Almost half of our rivers contain too much phosphorus, half of which comes from agricultural sources. This can increase the cost of supplying clean water to businesses, and other users.

RESILIENCE

Healthy soils are essential if our agricultural sector is to thrive: they bring greater yields, profits and resilience. Healthy soils not only benefit agricultural production, but also the water environment, as they reduce the amount of nutrients and pesticides running off farmland into rivers.

The Cam & Ely Ouse Water Stewardship Board

The Cam & Ely Ouse Water Stewardship Board is a collective of businesses working together as part of the CamEO Catchment Partnership (cameopartnership.org) to improve water management in the catchment, increasing business resilience as a result. The partnership is co-hosted by Anglian Water and The Rivers Trust and the board members include Anglian Water, Elveden Farm Estates, Produce World, Cam Grain, Sainsbury's, Hutchinsons, British Sugar and the NFU.

REGULATION

Regulation sets a level playing field for all businesses to work from. There is evidence that there is a non-compliance gap of around 20-30% for water legislation amongst the agricultural sector¹⁰. Water stewardship projects can support your business to meet your legal obligations, reducing regulatory and operational risks.

Encirc drinks bottling plant

At Encirc's drinks bottling plant in Elton, Merseyside, all wastewater is treated on-site, then discharged via a pond, reed bed and existing drainage ditches into the River Mersey. This minimises the impact of wastewater on the local river environment and creates new habitats for wildlife, leading to measurable improvements in water quality. Encirc's focus on its wider environment mean that its sites are havens for wildlife, including birds, bees and water voles.

REPUTATION

How your business manages, or is perceived to manage, water issues can pose a threat to your reputation. By being proactive and becoming water stewards, you have an opportunity to enhance your brand and reputation and stand out from the crowd as a more sustainable choice.

Simply Sustainable Water

LEAF (an NGO that promotes sustainable food and farming), in association with ASDA and Molson Coors, has developed a 'Simply Sustainable Water' booklet to help UK-based suppliers understand farming-related impacts on water and develop strategies to overcome them. You could improve the reputation of your business by encouraging your suppliers to adopt the steps and strategies outlined in the booklet (leafuk.org/leaf/farmers/ssw).

GUIDANCE FOR THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY IN ENGLAND

1. BE AWARE OF YOUR IMPACT

England experiences flooding, drought and poor water quality. These can all pose a threat to your business. So it's essential to understand the water context in the areas you operate to reduce your vulnerability and become more resource efficient. This could include:

- The quantity and quality of the water you and your suppliers use.
- What your local competitors are doing and whether you can replicate it.
- How your company is perceived by others.
- The rules and regulations that you and your suppliers must follow, now and in the future.

To really understand the impact you're having, any risks you're exposed to and opportunities you can take advantage of, you need to delve into the issues more deeply.

Water issues vary across the country, so you need to understand the state of play in the areas you, and your suppliers, operate. Information about the health of the rivers, lakes and groundwater is available online. See the recommended resources page.



WWF WATER RISK FILTER

WWF's Water Risk Filter is designed to help you understand where your main water risks might be and, importantly, what you can do about them.

Marks and Spencer has used the Water Risk Filter to understand the water risk in their food supply chains. In conjunction with information on the importance of particular products to the business, and their reliance on particular sourcing areas, this has allowed M&S to prioritise areas for water stewardship initiatives and has directly led to a project with fruit farmers in the Western Cape.

waterriskfilter.panda.org

2. IDENTIFY THE PRACTICAL ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE AND IMPLEMENT THEM

Once you've identified the issues and potential partners in the areas you and your suppliers operate, there will be lots of practical opportunities to take action. While appropriate responses are different in every catchment, there is some general advice you can apply:

- Make sure your business is complying with the rules. Get to know your local Environment Agency catchment coordinator (visit gov.uk website to identify the relevant catchment coordinator) to understand the risks and opportunities for the catchment or catchments you operate in.
- Try and reduce your water consumption and any impact you may be having on the water environment. Waterwise (waterwise.org.uk), a water efficiency charity, has some great examples of what other UK businesses have done.
- Go one step further and think creatively about how you can celebrate the water environment – create a wildlife pond on-site for staff and visitors to enjoy, or run an internal water awareness campaign to increase buy-in and support. The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust can provide helpful advice on sustainable urban drainage (wwt.org.uk).
- Be transparent about the water risks your business faces. This will help raise awareness with other businesses and encourage them to take action. You could make this public using the CDP Water Disclosure Platform (cdp.net/water).

THINK CREATIVELY
ABOUT HOW YOU
CAN CELEBRATE
THE WATER
ENVIRONMENT

BE TRANSPARENT
ABOUT THE
WATER RISK YOUR
BUSINESS FACES

3. WORK WITH YOUR SUPPLIERS

As a first step, support your suppliers to meet baseline legislation. Support schemes and initiatives that help farmers and landowners take action on water issues. These include Catchment Sensitive Farming priority areas, LEAF marque accreditation, Countryside Stewardship grants and farm visits. Provide incentives for suppliers to get involved – for example, by providing more favourable supply contracts.

Where risk has been identified – for example where water is particularly scarce or pollution is impacting rivers - work with your local Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) Catchment Partnership. This will help you engage the farming community to implement bespoke solutions, such as those encouraged by The Rivers Trust Pinpoint project (theriverstrust.org/pinpoint), that are monitored to determine impact.



Neil Punchard, Broadland Catchment, Partnership Officer

“Food and drinks businesses could support and help fund tramline management. This will help prevent run-off of soil, nutrients and pesticides, which is cost saving for businesses, improves water efficiency, and helps protect drinking water and rivers from pollution.”



Ed Bramham-Jones, Farm Advisor, CamEO catchment

“Repositioning gateways away from the bottom of slopes, or creating silt traps and bunds, can reduce soil and water leaving fields and entering watercourses.”

“Sowing cover crops after harvesting can improve the soil structure which reduces the risk of pollutants escaping from soils and running off into water courses.”



Alison Smyth, Farm Advisor, Broadland Catchment

“Fencing to prevent livestock access to a watercourse can reduce bank erosion and sedimentation into chalk streams; installing pasture pumps can provide alternative livestock drinking water.”

4. WORK WITH OTHERS IN THE CATCHMENT AND TAKE ACTION TOGETHER

Water risks aren’t something we experience in isolation – and we can’t solve them alone either. Once you’ve become water aware, the next step is to reach out to others in the same water catchment area. It’s highly likely other businesses in the catchment face similar issues, and will benefit from the same actions as you. So it’s important to identify water risks, agree necessary measures and monitor progress against your objectives together with others.

In England, the Catchment-Based Approach provides a framework to work with others to improve water management more widely, increase your resilience, and encourage your suppliers to do the same. There are active CaBA groups across England with over 1,500 organisations involved.

CATCHMENT-BASED APPROACH

The CaBA provides a platform for river catchment planning and local stakeholder engagement. There are active CaBA groups across England with over 1,500 organisations involved.

Engaging with the CaBA could help you:

- Identify and understand the biggest water-related risks to your business.
- Identify the most practical scale to take action.
- Talk to other businesses, farmers and wider stakeholders to discuss the issues and actions that are needed and develop integrated solutions.
- Fund actions that will directly mitigate your impact and risk.
- Monitor your success.
- Share learning.

CaBA groups are different all across England. Some are very advanced with long-established infrastructures. Others are just starting, and could really benefit from your support and involvement.

Visit: catchmentbasedapproach.org

5. CREATE LASTING CHANGE

Influencing the rules, policies and decision-making processes around water management can deliver lasting improvements that benefit all water users and ensure improvements you've made are sustained.

There are many ways for you to begin to influence governance:

- Become a member of your local CaBA group.
- Respond to government consultations on water issues and take an active role in decision-making about your catchment.
- Organise and attend workshops on water issues that matter to your business.
- Encourage other businesses to engage in water stewardship.

Work with WWF-UK to support the government to put protection of the environment and sustainability of food and drink supply chains at the heart of developing abstraction and agricultural policies:

wwf.org.uk/waterstewardship

Coca-Cola working to improve English rivers

Coca-Cola is supporting farmers to implement water sensitive farming in East Anglia. In addition, in partnership with WWF-UK, Coca-Cola has taken a number of steps to influence water governance in England. These include:

- Attending a business roundtable on water with the Secretary of State for the Environment
- Attending a sugar beet workshop with others in the supply chain
- Publicly committing to abstraction reform, the system that approves water being taken out of the environment
- Attending a river visit with politicians
- Influencing other businesses to work on similar issues.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Business in the Community report: Water – securing the resources for future prosperity:
bitc.org.uk/our-resources/report/smart-water-prosperous-future-food-and-drink-supply-chain

Compliance in the agriculture and land management sector report:
waterlife.org.uk/progress

Environment Agency: Progressing towards WFD objectives – the role of agriculture:
waterlife.org.uk/progress

Environment Agency River Basin Management Plans:
gov.uk/government/collections/river-basin-management-plans-2015

Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform - Water Stewardship for Sustainable Agriculture:
saipatform.org/activities/committees/water-committee/water-stewardship-for-sustainable-agriculture

The Catchment-Based Approach: catchmentbasedapproach.org

The Rivers Trust: theriverstrust.org

WaterLIFE: waterlife.org.uk

WWF: From Risk to Resilience Report: wwf.org.uk/waterstewardship

WWF Water Risk Filter: waterriskfilter.panda.org

ENDNOTES

1 Knox, J, Daccache, A, Weatherhead, K, Groves, S and A Hulin. 2013. Assessment of the impacts of climate change and changes in land use on future water requirement and availability for farming, and opportunities for adaptation. R&D Technical Report FFG1129/TR. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London, UK. Available from: randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=11705_DefraFFG1129_Cranfield_PhaseIFinal_05.12.13.pdf

2 WWF, 2010. Living Planet Report 2010: Biodiversity, Biocapacity and Development.

3 Environment Agency. 2013. The Case for Change.

4 A consultation on the draft update to the river basin management plan Part 3: Economic analysis' EA 2014.

5 Blueprint for Water coalition

6 EA CAMS data provided to WWF-UK September 2014

7 waterlife.org.uk/2015/05/progressing-towards-waterframework-directive-objectives-the-role-of-agriculture

8 EA River Basin Management Plans 2015

9 EA CAMS data provided to WWF-UK September 2014

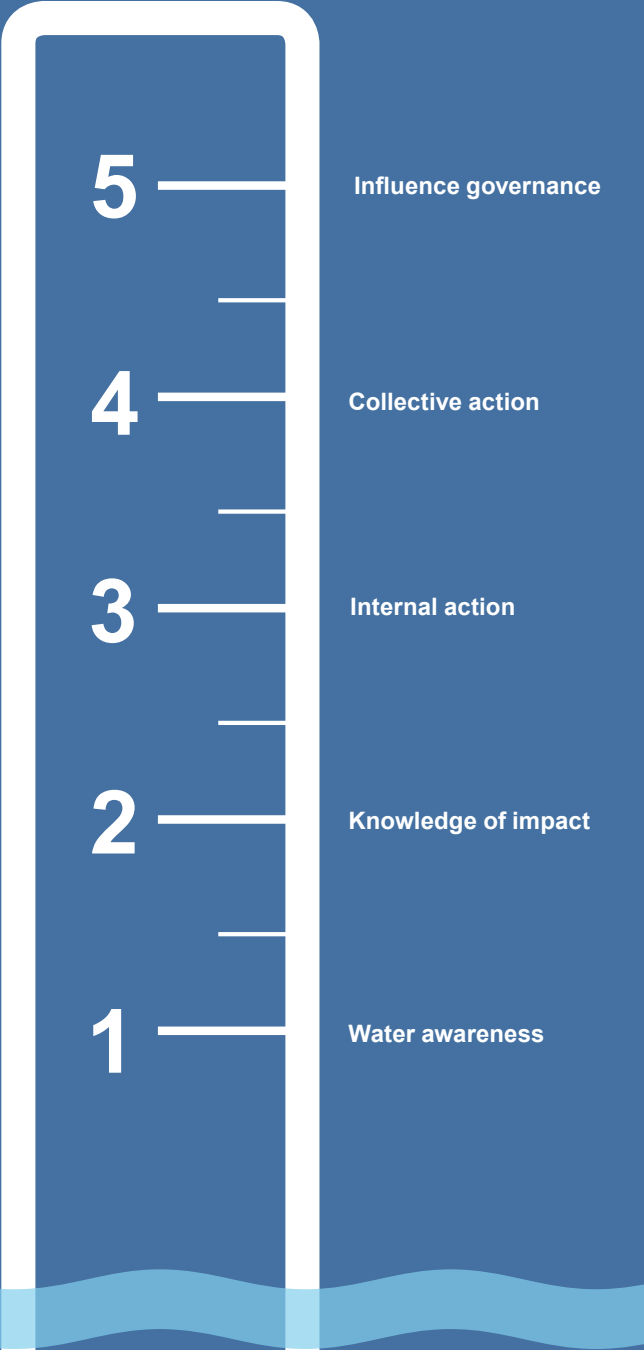
10 waterlife.org.uk/2015/04/agricultural-compliance-report-and-recommendations-2015

WWF’S WATER STEWARDSHIP FRAMEWORK

WWF’s water stewardship framework sets out the steps companies can take to mitigate their water risk though supporting improved management of freshwater resources.

Importantly, steps 4 and 5 highlight the need for businesses to move beyond internal water management (which won’t be sufficient to mitigate water risk) and commit to sustainable management of shared water resources through collective action with other businesses, governments, NGOs and communities, and by influencing the rules that determine how water is managed. For businesses to become good water stewards, steps 4 and 5 are essential.

Visit wwf.org.uk/waterstewardship for more information.



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