

MAY 2023

FRESHWATER FARM PLANS SYSTEM FACTSHEET

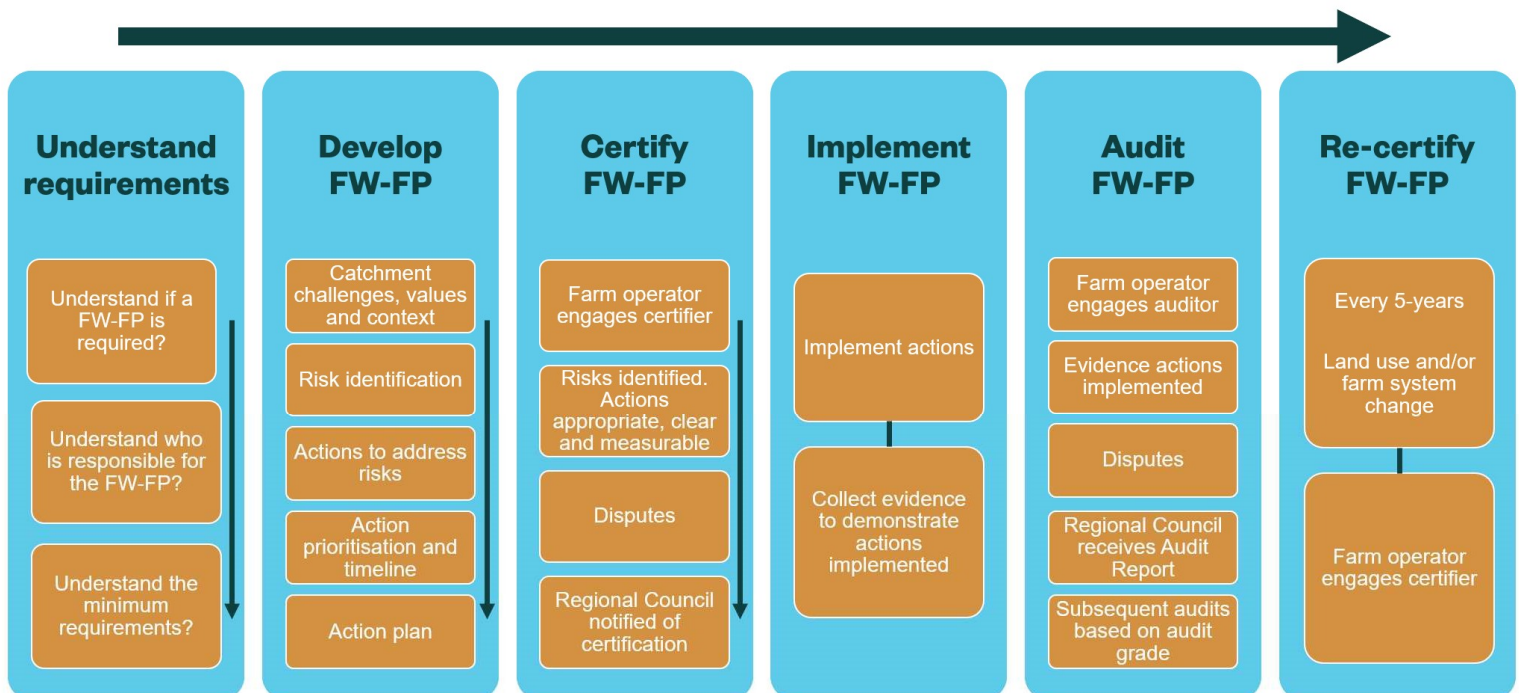
FWFP will identify on-farm actions that help improve local freshwater. Actions will be tailored to a farm's physical environment and the catchment context. This factsheet outlines the Freshwater Farm Plan (FWFP) system with need-to-know information for regional and unitary councils.

If there is anything else about the system you are unsure of, please contact Warwick Murray (Warwick.Murray@teurukahika.govt.nz) to discuss.

FWFP SYSTEM OUTLINE

System Oversight

Guidance and support
Certifier and auditor appointment system
Monitoring, reporting and compliance enforcement
Regulation and guidance updates



FRESHWATER FARM PLANS SYSTEM PURPOSE

The Freshwater Farm Plans (FWFP) system intends to pull together many of the Essential Freshwater threads at a catchment and farm level by consolidating rules, regulations, and plans into a single FWFP. Every farm with more than 20 hectares in arable or pastoral use, more than 5 hectares in horticultural use, or more than 20 hectares of combined use will require a FWFP.

The Essential Freshwater package set out a new national direction for freshwater via the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM). The National Environment Standards for Freshwater 2020 (NES-F) introduced some immediate changes to halt water quality decline and see improvements within five years.

FWFP are expected to become an important tool for farmers and growers to manage all on-farm freshwater regulatory requirements.

As a package, it requires regional and unitary councils to amend regional policy statements and plans by the end of 2024 to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, as well as several reforms, some of which are now in effect. The package included:

- Restrictions on agricultural intensification
- Limits on synthetic nitrogen use (N-Cap webform)
- Changes to intensive winter grazing regulations
- Stock exclusion, stockholding, and feedlot regulations
- Stronger protection for rivers and wetlands, inc. fish passage
- Sediment and erosion control measures.

FWFP are mandated under Part 9A of the RMA. Resource consents or rules will still be necessary for some activities. It has been signaled that FWFP may become a module of the integrated farm plan system in due course.

REGIONAL AND UNITARY COUNCILS PLACE IN THE SYSTEM

While nationally directed, implementation of the FWFP system will happen at a regional level. Our sector is set to support the system that will get around 34,500 freshwater farm plans in place over the coming years. To deliver this scale of change will require shifts in some aspects of how councils work with their farming communities.

The national system is designed in a way that requires central govt, regional and unitary councils, tangata whenua, farmers and growers, and industry to work together. All actors in the system have a different role to play for the system to best function. The legal responsibilities of regional councils in the FWFP system are under Part 9a of the RMA: www.bit.ly/3VQNTWm

Broadly regional councils have a handful of important roles in the system:

- Providing catchment challenges, context, and values (CCCV)
- Continuing to work with iwi/hapū/Māori landowners through the regional freshwater planning process, and work together on aspects of CCCV and certifier/auditor appointments.
- Appointing (and potentially training) certifiers and auditors as per the guidance and support of the national processes being established with AssureQuality.
- Keeping records of certified FWFPs and audits of FWFPs undertaken.
- Develop a CME strategy for the FWFP system.

The roll-out of FWFP in each region will benefit from multiple in-council teams working together, including but not limited to land managers, policy, freshwater science, Māori and iwi partnerships, consents, compliance, and communications.

TE URU KAHIKA IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

The system is designed to function through strong central and regional relationships. National oversight is intended to benefit local delivery by regional councils. Within councils, teams should aim for national consistency as a starting point, but there is absolutely space for regional flavour. There are benefits to this approach for all involved in the new FWFP system, including farm operators, iwi/hapū, and stakeholders, and it will help make the transition as smooth as possible.

In recognition of the importance and scale of the roll-out, our 16 regional and unitary councils have committed to supporting one another with FWFP implementation. The sector's Te Uru Kahika FWFP Project team will support parts of the system, provide information and resources for councils to draw on, work with stakeholders for the benefit of all, help achieve national consistency, and will develop and host the farmer-facing Freshwater Farm Plans Online Handbook to reduce duplication of efforts.

In addition, Te Uru Kahika have a project to develop the Integrated National Farm Data Platform (INFDP). Regional and unitary councils will collectively own and operate the INFDP as a core function of data collection, monitoring, and reporting. The INFDP project team is engaging with councils and stakeholders ahead of the INFDP build.

SYSTEM ROLL-OUT

The system will be implemented in a few regions at a time at the discretion of the Minister. The first two regional/unitary councils to implement FWFP in parts of their region will be Environment Southland and Waikato Regional Council. They are expected to be 'switched on' for their first set of identified catchments in August this year.

The remaining 14 regional and unitary councils will have the regulations come into effect at various times over the next few years. There will be an ongoing dialogue between MfE and councils about timing, order, and implementation support. We will learn from and collaborate with one another as the system beds in.



The final rollout schedule is being determined following some changes to the proposed schedule due to the impacts of recent extreme weather events. The schedule is being designed to ensure FWFP are available across the country by 2025, but the order of councils is subject to change depending on factors such as the appointment process, workforce availability and pipeline, industry programme development and transition, and regional/unitary council readiness.

GET PREPARED

Regional and unitary councils play an important role in the FWFP system. Council expertise, local knowledge, and relationships will contribute to the successful roll out of the system and help shape the freshwater farm plans in each region. In this way, council's part in the system will make a difference to the future health of freshwater in Aotearoa New Zealand.

FWFP SYSTEM INTERNAL PREP LIST

Consider how once regulations are released and before switch on in your region, your council will:

Engage with iwi/hapū around CCCV and appointment process

Collate and present CCCV

Raise awareness among the farming community

Engage with stakeholders in industry

Support certifiers and auditors to have required local knowledge

Strengthen internal links across teams for delivery

Develop a CME strategy for FWFP

Best account for FWFP in your planning frameworks

