

Germany Case study – Fertiliser assessment via ‘farm gate balance sheets’

Country	Germany
Sector	Agriculture
Year	2018-2023
Narrative description	<p>Drafting and applying material flow balance sheets is mandatory in Germany for larger farms as of 2018 and smaller farms as of 2023. On a farm level, nutrients enter and leave on different pathways. Fertiliser, animal feed, animals, seeds and seedlings as well as nitrogen-fixing plants from the air (e.g. legumes) supply nutrients to a farm, and leave them again via the agricultural products produced. The regulation provides the methodology on how to calculate this nitrogen balance.</p> <p>The measure should be seen as having a mandatory awareness raising and data collection approach. While the calculations can reveal an imbalance, that is nutrients leaving the farm in other ways than as agricultural products, no mandatory action is required in such a case. However, such imbalances would not just reveal on-farm nutrient losses as greenhouse gas into the air and pollutants into the water, but also show ways to improve efficiency, by reducing these losses. In that respect it can be an easy to replicate policy for countries, who are less advanced on their nutrient management policies.</p>
Responsible authority	German Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture (BMEL)
Relevant legal basis	Stoffstrombilanzverordnung
Policy Type	Regulation on data collection and submission
Governance Level/ Target audience	National / farmers and group of farmers
Objectives	Awareness raising and data collection to reduce on-farm nutrient loss (and thereby GHG emissions)

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Summary of reasons for success	While the measure is seen as burden to farmers, it was also a way to avoid stricter regulation. The measure is relatively new in Germany and a first evaluation will only be conducted in 2021. What will be with the data and information acquired will be crucial, i.e. how farmers can be supported and incentivised to address the identified nutrient losses.
Replication potential	Similar measures have been implemented before, for instance in Denmark. In general, replication is already possible as this is a rather soft measure. Instead of making it mandatory the measure could also be linked to existing subsidies. In any case success will depend on the actual reduction of fertiliser use and therefore the measure should be integrated into a wider policy framework.
Relevant website	" https://www.bmel.de/DE/Landwirtschaft/Pflanzenbau/Ackerbau/_Texte/Stoffstrombilanz.html http://www.stoffstrombilanz.com/ "