



factsheet



the safe sludge matrix

The safe sludge matrix - What is it?

It forms the basis of a landmark agreement between Water UK (representing the water industry) and the British Retail Consortium (BRC) (representing the major supermarket retailers). It consists of a table of the crop types, together with clear guidance on the minimum acceptable standards of biosolids (conventional or enhanced treatment), which may be applied to a particular crop or rotation.

The agreement was driven by the desire to ensure the highest possible standards of food safety and to provide a framework which gives the retailers and food industry confidence that biosolids reuse on agricultural land is safe. The matrix enables farmers and growers to continue to utilise the beneficial properties in biosolids as a valuable and cost effective source of nutrients and organic matter.

What ensures a biosolids product meets the standard of 'conventional' or 'enhanced' treatment?

Along with the sludge use in agriculture regulations and the associated 'code of practice', the safe sludge matrix is to be encompassed with the new regulations to ensure regulatory control. To deliver the appropriate standards of treatment for either 'conventional' or 'enhanced', the process of HACCP (Hazards Analysis of Critical Control Points) has been adopted within the water and wastewater industry.

What are the impacts to farmers?

The main impact has been the phasing out of raw or untreated sludge use on agricultural land for food production. Anglian Water stopped using untreated or raw sludges in 1998. Now, only conventionally treated biosolids, known as nutri-bio, are produced by Anglian Water.

Conventionally treated sludge

There are a range of different treatment processes used to reduce the fermentability and possible health hazards associated with sewage sludge. These may rely on biological, chemical or heat treatment.

The most common form of treatment is anaerobic digestion. Conventionally treated sludge has been subjected to defined treatment processes and standards that ensure 99% of pathogens have been destroyed. Lime treatment is also used to achieve the same effect. Enhanced treated Biosolids ensure 99.9% of pathogens are destroyed.

If you would like further information on the "Safe Sludge Matrix" take a look at the ADAS website. Visit www.adas.co.uk/matrix

If you do not have access to the internet please ask your Farm Sales Advisor for a copy or call **01223 542889**, and we will be pleased to send you one.

