

Conditions for using the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard tool in your farm plan

1. The tool is only able to be used for dairy farms and any support blocks which form part of the landholding.
2. The tool must be used undertaking the following steps:
 - a. A farm data check is carried out to ensure input data makes sense and is representative of the farm system.
 - b. The farm input data is processed via automated NRS engine or via excel spreadsheet.
 - c. Data used for input into the tool must be made available for verification upon certification of your farm plan.
 - d. The version used (if known) and date the tool is used is explicitly stated in the Assessment (Part 3).
3. As part of an assessment using the tool a suitably qualified person will provide a short summary that shows the key findings of the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard report and the main opportunities that exist to reduce nitrogen losses. Key aspects of regional differences e.g. climate variability, will be considered and the assessment will adjust the risk ratings (as expressed on the scale from 'very low' to 'very high') to:
 - a. reflect that discharge to land is the standard in Southland, rather than being of low risk compared to discharging to water; and
 - b. reflect Southland standards for effluent storage, which are significantly higher than 10 days in order to ensure that effluent is discharged when soils are below field capacity. The storage requirement is usually calculated using the Dairy Effluent Storage Calculator or otherwise uses 90 days as a guide; and
 - c. reflect the risks of different types of discharge methods, including the rates (above or below 10mm/hour) and depths (above or below 5 or 10mm) of effluent application; and
 - d. consider and comment on the size of the disposal area in the context of multiple sources of effluent and ability to uptake nutrients before repeat applications, and;
 - e. reflect that fertiliser application in Southland during the months of May, June, and July contribute to a higher risk of N loss from the farm; and
 - f. reflect that fertiliser application in the same areas of effluent application contribute to a higher risk of N loss from the farm; and
 - g. reflect that applications of fertiliser N above 50kg N/ha per dressing contributes to a higher risk of N loss from the farm.

Criteria for Suitably Qualified person:

The Southland Water and Land Plan (Appendix N) requires that the nutrient loss risk assessment must be prepared by a suitably qualified person approved as such by the Chief Executive.

There are no specific skills required to run the automated or Excel version of the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard, but experience is required to assess the Scorecard inputs and to interpret the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard results in combination with the assessment required by the conditions recommended above in order to identify recommended farm plan actions.

The recommendations for approving the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard mean that "an assessment undertaken using a nutrient loss risk assessment tool" would include a sense check of the data entered into the scorecard and the interpretation of the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard results in the context of the other data available for the farm, such as physiographics, soil and catchment context.

The person undertaking the assessment needs to be able to demonstrate that there is sufficient ability to interpret the tool and put it into the correct context.

Fonterra's recommendation was that for this specific Fonterra nutrient loss risk assessment tool, a Suitably Qualified Person would be someone who has completed the Freshwater Farm Plan certification process. This would provide confidence that a person has a general understanding of farm systems and would be able to identify risks relating to practices on farm. Environment Southland agree that an approved Southland farm plan certifier would be an appropriate Suitably Qualified Person.

A person who is qualified as a Certified Nutrient Management Advisor (through the Nutrient Management Adviser Certification Programme) or a New Zealand Institute of Primary Industry Management Certified Dairy Farm Systems Consultant would have similar abilities and be equally capable of using the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard outputs. Further explanation of these qualifications are below:

A CNMA is a person who has completed the Intermediate and Advanced courses in Sustainable Nutrient Management in New Zealand Agriculture through Massey University, and who has passed a competency assessment. They are also required to work to a Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct, which provides further assurance.

New Zealand Institute of Primary Industry Management (NZIPIM) Certified Dairy Farm Systems Consultants have completed two levels of certification, and have further requirements to meet in terms of hours of paid consultancy work and having a Whole Farm Assessment report reviewed. The DairyNZ website explains the NZIPIM Certified Dairy Farm Systems Consultants as using "a whole farm systems approach to identify risks and opportunities on farm and provide context-specific recommendations in line with the farm business strategy".

Environment Southland consider that either of the certifications above would ensure sufficient knowledge and competency to be considered a Suitably Qualified Person for the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard tool.

For this reason, for the purposes of carrying out an assessment using the Nitrogen Risk Scorecard, any person who holds one or more of the following qualifications is an approved Suitably Qualified Person:

1. Freshwater Farm Plan certifier (approved by Environment Southland Chief Executive or delegate)
2. Certified Nutrient Management Advisor; through the Nutrient Management Adviser Certification Programme
3. NZIPIM Certified Dairy Farm Systems Consultant