

Title: The problem of Agricultural 'diffuse' pollution: Getting to the point.

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Abstract (149 words):

Agricultural pollution is a growing threat to Irish water quality, despite the introduction of legislation such as the Nitrates Directive and WFD. Much of this pollution is described as being of diffuse origin, but the term is ambiguous, referring both to multiple unknown sources within a catchment and to field surface and sub-surface runoff. Small, distributed sources of pollution, such as farmyards, are largely unmapped within catchments, yet represent a potentially important contributor to nutrient concentrations in streams. In this study, we surveyed water chemistry of a Co. Cork dairy catchment at a high spatial resolution. Most headwaters in the catchment were impacted by nutrient-rich, organic inputs via drainage ditches from the vicinity of farmyards. Our empirical data has shown that such small point-source inputs constitute a major contribution to catchment scale 'diffuse' pollution and that these should be the focus of greater management efforts at reducing agricultural pollution.