

Diffuse pollution and water quality challenge in New Zealand: Regulation dilemma argument

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What happens when regulators apply rigid command and control programs to prevent diffuse pollution? Do businesses choose to evade these programs in order to offset the potential costs and survive in the markets? Governments mostly avoid regulatory relief not to signal permission to pollute. However, some businesses perceive regulations to undermine their operations. Regulations are keeping them in the naughty corner no matter what they do to greenwash their actions. In this equation, there is not enough room for cooperation between the parties to establish the missing trust that would fix the pollution.

New Zealand is currently experiencing this dilemma in water quality governance. Its decentralised political culture based on the Resource Management Act reflects its grassroots democracy. However, it does not equally establish the cooperation spirit among the stakeholders cleaning up the diffuse pollution caused by agricultural land use. This paper will examine the 'regulation dilemma' and look into policy options for New Zealand to decipher the dilemma.

¹ Opinions expressed in this paper are author's own and do not represent MAF policy.