

How Do I Meet the Environment Module Requirements?



Why is there an Environment module for proAction®?

The Environment module aims to:

- Identify and mitigate environmental risks; make more efficient use of resources; enhance soil health and biodiversity; reduce waste; preserve land and water quality
- Demonstrate the value farmers place on environmental health and provide assurance to consumers

Key resources for the module

- ➔ [proAction Reference Manual and workbook](#)
- ➔ [proAction resources for the Environment module](#)

What are the Environment module requirements?

The Environment module has five requirements aimed at mitigating environmental risks and promoting positive action:

1 Have a valid provincial Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) or Plan d'accompagnement agroenvironnemental (PAA) or PAA-equivalent

What is it and why is it important?	Frequently asked questions	
<p>What is it? An Environmental Farm Plan (EFP; PAA in Quebec) is a confidential assessment that evaluates areas of strength and potential environmental risks associated with an individual farm operation. The resulting EFP is confidential, includes action plans, and is specific to each farm.</p> <p>By completing an EFP you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gain an increased awareness of areas of potential environmental concern ● Learn about relevant legislation and regulation ● Develop individualized plans to address or monitor identified areas of risk that are site-specific 	<p>How do I complete an EFP or PAA? The EFP and PAA are delivered in a variety of formats depending on the province (e.g., workshop, online, with the assistance of an advisor) and are offered by each provincial EFP/PAA organization. Information on the process to complete an EFP/PAA can be found on your provincial organization's website. The PAA-equivalent can be found on the extranet of the Producteurs de lait du Québec in the proAction / Environment section.</p> <p>How do I provide proof to the validator that my EFP is completed and valid? Show a valid certificate or statement of completion. Some provinces show a completed report or workbook.</p> <p>How long is an EFP valid? To be valid, the document must be current according to the expiry or validity period established by the province. If the province does not establish an expiry or validity period, the EFP or PAA must be current within the past 10 years.</p>	
Where can I go for more information?	Provincial Environmental Farm Plan office websites	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provincial Environmental Farm Plan office (website links provided on the right) ● Provincial proAction contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Columbia Alberta Saskatchewan Manitoba Ontario 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quebec New Brunswick Nova Scotia Prince Edward Island Newfoundland and Labrador

2 Complete the Environmental Questionnaire

What is it and why is it important?

What is it? The proAction Environmental Questionnaire gathers data on the use of on-farm practices related to soil health, greenhouse gases, biodiversity, silage seepage and plastic waste. For all provinces, with the exception of Quebec, the questionnaire is completed online through the National Electronic Administrative System (NEAS), accessible at www.dairyproaction.ca. For Quebec, the questionnaire is completed through the [extranet of the Producteurs de lait du Québec](#) in the proAction / Environment section.

Why? The questionnaire helps farms identify positive practices they have already adopted and increases awareness of and encourages implementation of environmental best management practices. The questionnaire also:

- Gathers anonymized, aggregated information that helps the industry describe nationally-consistent practices undertaken to advance environmental stewardship
- Verifies and validates marketing claims and assures the supply chain of the dairy industry's commitment to environmental stewardship

Frequently asked questions

How often do I need to complete the questionnaire? The questionnaire needs to be completed every 2 years in combination with your regularly scheduled proAction validation.

Why do some practices listed on the Environmental Questionnaire not apply to my farm or region? Canada has a diverse landscape and the practices farmers use to protect soil health, water quality and wildlife differ accordingly. Some practices listed will not apply in all regions. In these cases, you have the option to indicate that it is not applicable on your farm.

How do I complete the questionnaire if I do not have internet access? The questionnaire can be completed with the assistance of your provincial coordinator. Contact field staff and/or provincial coordinator for proAction in your province.

3 Reduce the risk of contamination from wastewater

What is it and why is it important?

What is it? Farmers must dispose of milking centre wastewater in a manner that does not contaminate soil, ground or surface water. It should not go into a ditch or stream. Wastewater must be managed with proper storage or a regulatory approved treatment system.

Why? Milking centre wastewater may contain phosphorus, nitrogen, detergents, acids and potential pathogens, therefore proper disposal of wastewater is required.

Frequently asked questions

How do I provide proof to the validator? Describe your milking centre wastewater system to the validator, who will evaluate the risk.

What is acceptable storage or treatment? Most dairy operations release milking centre wastewater into manure storage or into a properly constructed septic system, both are acceptable. Other examples of acceptable storage options include: sediment tank or flocculator; constructed wetland; vegetated filter strip.

4 Reduce the risk of contamination from manure

What is it and why is it important?

What is it? Manure storage must be adequate to:

- Avoid contamination of surface and groundwater
- Avoid spreading manure on frozen, snow-covered or saturated ground

Why? Applying manure to saturated or frozen ground increases the potential for water contamination because the soil cannot absorb the applied nutrients making manure-contaminated runoff more likely to occur. There is also no agronomic value to applying manure on saturated or frozen ground.

Frequently asked questions

How do I provide proof to the validator?

Describe your manure storage system, manure storage capacity and manure spreading practices to the validator.

How much storage do I need? The required number of days of storage varies by province, some provinces have not stipulated storage capacity requirements. Check with your provincial government for specific regulations and guidelines. However, the desired outcome is to have enough storage to avoid spreading manure on frozen, snow-covered or saturated ground.

5 Make the best use of manure and other nutrients on the farm

What is it and why is it important?

What is it? A nutrient management plan (NMP) and soil testing are important for establishing appropriate application rates of manure and fertilizer. These practices ensure the optimal use of resources and reduce the risk of contaminating surface or groundwater.

Why? The deliberate management of manure and fertilizer resources ensures that the applied nutrients are used as efficiently as possible:

- Nutrient losses during and after manure application are minimized
- Nutrients are applied at rates that do not result in their accumulation in the soil
- Nutrients are applied in such a manner that minimizes their risk of loss and ensures they are available for crop use

Frequently asked questions

How do I provide proof to the validator? Show a valid provincially approved NMP or soil test result. Farmers must have a valid provincially approved NMP **OR** test soil at least every three years for all lands receiving manure. Farmers must then use these results to optimize the use of manure or fertilizer on land.

Do I need an NMP? An NMP is a plan to make the best agronomic use of manure and other fertilizing inputs. A formal NMP is encouraged, but not required to meet this requirement, if you soil test instead.

How often do I need to soil test? If a farm does not have a valid provincially approved NMP, they are required to test soil at least every three years for all lands receiving manure.

Frequently Asked Questions



Where can I go for more information?

For more information on regulations specific to your province, contact:

- Provincial dairy association
- Provincial agriculture and/or environmental department
- Provincial Environmental Farm Plan office (see page 1 for website information)

Do I need to do anything beyond these five requirements?

Farmers are responsible for meeting any applicable provincial regulations. Most provinces have some level of regulation for manure and fertilizer use and some provinces have established specific regulations for wastewater management. As it makes sense for their operations, farmers are also encouraged to consider adopting environmental best management practices identified in the Environmental Questionnaire and the [Net-Zero BMP Guide](#).

Why is there duplication between the Environmental Farm Plan and the Environmental Questionnaire?

The EFP is provincial and confidential and the EFP action plans are specific to your farm. While the EFP is a powerful tool to demonstrate dairy farmers' commitment to sound environmental practices, Dairy Farmers of Canada cannot access EFP information, nor can a validator ask to see the details to evaluate your EFP results.

In order to provide customer assurance and to describe nationally-consistent environmental stewardship practices of Canadian dairy farms, all farms need to complete the Environmental Questionnaire. The questionnaire serves as the way to encourage adoption of national priority best management practices and for the industry to gather aggregate data on environmental practices. **Though there is overlap in the questions, an EFP and the questionnaire have different purposes and they are both required.**

What is the difference between an EFP and an NMP?

An EFP covers a broader range of environmental stewardship practices, while an NMP is focused on application of manure and other nutrients as well as using nutrients efficiently.

Why do I have to soil test every 3 years when I have a 4-year rotation?

Soil nutrients change year over year, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus. Soil testing is required so farms can optimize crop production and prevent environmental contamination by runoff and leaching of excess fertilizers. The requirement to test every 3 years is a minimum.

How is the environment linked to milk quality?

Dairy farming is intricately linked with the environment. Healthy soil produces high quality crops and forages, which can improve feed efficiency and milk quality. In turn, manure fertilizes crops and feeds microorganisms which creates healthy soil. Additionally, thousands of species make their homes on agricultural landscapes. Farming with the environment in mind can benefit your bottom line, support the continuity of our industry, and address consumer expectations.

Is the Environment module part of the Net-Zero Strategy?

The net-zero strategy and Environment module share the goal of helping you take note of your positive on-farm actions with respect to the environment, and identify areas that could further benefit your farm and mitigate the impacts of climate change. As you meet the Environment module requirements, you will also be implementing on-farm practices that will help our industry achieve the net-zero by 2050 target.

The net-zero strategy provides the opportunity to explore best management practices that target additional sustainability areas that contribute to the overall efficiency of your farm. For more information, visit www.dairyfarmersofcanada.ca/en/farmer-resources/net-zero-2050