

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002120/25
to the Commission
Sander Smit (PPE)
(27 May 2025)

Subject: Recognising the opportunities presented by RENURE

RENURE ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾ offers several benefits that are closely aligned with the European Union's economic, geopolitical and environmental objectives. First, it promotes the circular use of nutrients, which is essential for sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, RENURE contributes to reducing energy dependence by exploiting the methane, or biogas, released as climate-friendly green gas.

The recovery of phosphorus — identified as a critical raw material under the Critical Raw Materials Act ⁽³⁾ — reduces strategic dependence on imports from third countries. Moreover, RENURE contributes to CO₂ reduction by rendering the use of synthetic fertilisers unnecessary. Applying nitrogen separately from phosphate also avoids unnecessary phosphate loading of agricultural land.

Finally, the underlying technologies and innovations are more widely applicable, for instance for nutrient recovery from sewage sludge. The above illustrates that RENURE perfectly matches the biotech and innovation ambitions of the European Union.

1. Does the Commission recognise the potential of RENURE for application within Europe and as an export product?
2. Does the Commission recognise the special added value of RENURE, both ecologically and economically, particularly in regions which specialise in livestock farming?
3. How does the Commission view the past few years in which the development and application of RENURE has actually been delayed despite calls for action from Parliament?

Submitted: 27.5.2025

Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(1 August 2025)

The Nitrates Directive ⁽¹⁾ limits the amount of livestock manure that can be spread on fields, as the spreading of livestock manure — an organic fertiliser — is associated with specific environmental risks.

Since the adoption of the directive, new forms of advanced industrial processing of livestock manure have emerged, such as RENURE.

These new processing techniques result in materials that behave in a more similar way to chemical fertilisers, reducing risks to the environment under certain conditions ⁽²⁾. Such materials, if they comply with the Fertilising Product Regulation ⁽³⁾, can also be marketed in the internal market.

Improving nutrients management, increasing circularity and addressing nutrient pollution hotspots is a priority of this Commission, as confirmed in the Vision for Agriculture and Food ⁽⁴⁾ and Water Resilience Strategy ⁽⁵⁾.

Both policy initiatives call for the management of nutrients from livestock farming to limit negative externalities, supporting intensification in regions with high livestock concentrations and promoting circularity which can help reduce dependencies on imported fertilisers, a win-win for the environment and climate.

¹ European Commission JRC Science for Policy Report, 'Technical proposals for the safe use of processed manure above the threshold established for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones by the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)', 2020.

² European Commission, Draft Commission Directive amending Council Directive 91/676/EEC as regards the use of certain fertilising materials from livestock manure, Ref. Ares(2024)2885619 — 19 April 2024, unpublished draft.

³ Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 — Critical Raw Materials Act, OJ L 202, 19.4.2024, p. 1-72.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 91/676/EEC of 12 December 1991 concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources, OJ L 375, 31.12.1991, p. 1-8.

⁽²⁾ Huygens, D., Orveillon, G., Lugato, E., Tavazzi, S., Comero, S., Jones, A., Gawlik, B. and Saveyn, H., Technical proposals for the safe use of processed manure above the threshold established for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones by the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC), EUR 30363 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-21539-4, doi:10.2760/373351, JRC121636.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 laying down rules on the making available on the market of EU fertilising products and amending Regulations (EC) No 1069/2009 and (EC) No 1107/2009 and repealing Regulation (EC) No 2003/2003, OJ L 170, 25.6.2019, p. 1-114.

⁽⁴⁾ Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A Vision for Agriculture and Food Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations, COM/2025/75 final.

⁽⁵⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/environment/water-resilience-strategy_en.

Nevertheless, the impacts in nitrates vulnerable zones require careful consideration. In April 2024, the Commission published for public feedback ⁽⁶⁾ a draft Commission Directive amending the Nitrates Directive to allow the use of certain types of processed livestock manure above the limit for land application of livestock manure, within certain limits and conditions.

Discussions on the draft text are underway in the Nitrates Committee with the competent Member State authorities, in line with the legal comitology procedure.

⁽⁶⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14242-Nitrates-updated-rules-on-the-use-of-certain-fertilising-materials-from-livestock-manure-RENURE_en.