

Have regulators failed to address agriculture's fertilizer pollution problem?

Everywhere Randy Souder looked, he saw mud. On his soggy fields. In the mechanized crannies of his planter. Along the rural road to his house, where he'd left a trail of clumps. It was late June, and record-breaking rain had pushed the state's corn-planting rate to its lowest level in nearly four decades. Souder hoped the summer sun would dry the soil quickly.

Once it did, Souder could finally start the critical next step cast a 100-foot swath of fertilizer over his crop. That blast of nitrogen would make the ears grow large and dense with kernels if applied at the right time.

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But this agricultural alchemy comes with a toll. In America's Corn Belt and around the world, some of the fertilizer applied to fields escapes the soil in new forms that contaminate and warm the planet.

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The rate that farmers in the U.S. are using nitrogen fertilizer is more than 40 times higher than it was three-quarters of a century ago, far outstripping population growth The EPA's science advisors have recommended nitrogen control since the early years of the agency's existence, to little avail. Agriculture, in fact, has evaded much of the federal environmental oversight that falls on other polluting sectors.

[Read the original post here.](#)