

## Fertcare Information Sheet

### **Purpose**

This information sheet provides a summary of the Australian Fertilizer Industry's product stewardship program, Fertcare®. As a member of the industry, you may be required to complete the appropriate level of Fertcare training, to help you understanding some of the environmental, food safety and occupational health & safety risks associated with our products. If you don't need to complete training it will still be useful for you to know a little bit about the program and what those who complete training will have covered.

### **Why Fertcare?**

Fertcare has been developed to help address a number of issues of public concern – particularly water quality, greenhouse gas emissions and food safety. Fertcare promotes efficient fertilizer use because when the right type of fertilizer is applied in the right amount at the right time and in the right place, the risk of off-site problems is minimized.

Fertcare also aims to provide customers with confidence that the advice and services they receive are based on current science and industry best practice. Occupational health and safety is another issue of national concern and is addressed in Fertcare training.

By effectively dealing with issues of public concern, governments are reassured that the fertilizer industry can be a credible and responsible contributor to managing these issues. In response, governments are more likely to invite the industry to be involved in the development of policies that affect its members.

### **What is Fertcare?**

Fertcare is a training, quality assurance, certification and accreditation program developed by the fertilizer industry, with significant support from the Australian Government. The program provides the foundation of the industry's commitment to sustainable farming.

### ***Training for People***

Fertcare trains industry staff in the competencies required to meet their responsibilities for food safety and environmental risk management. Fertcare also develops awareness of the occupational health and safety issues associated with fertilizer and soil ameliorant products.

Fertcare is delivered at three levels that match the specific needs of different fertilizer support roles.

- **Level A** is for people involved in the direct handling of fertilizers – specifically transportation, storage and spreading.
- **Level B** is for sales staff and aims to improve their knowledge of fertilizer products, and to enable them to provide warnings and simple advice. Importantly, Level B emphasizes the need to refer customers to *Fertcare Accredited Advisers* where appropriate.
- **Level C** is for plant nutrition advisers and covers a detailed and complex knowledge of environmental issues, including the use of a fertilizer environmental risk assessment and management methodology. Level C training is a prerequisite for becoming a *Fertcare Accredited Adviser*.

Fertcare training is delivered by independent providers, through nationally Registered Training Organizations.

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### ***Fertcare Accredited Advisers***

The Fertcare Accredited Adviser Program assesses the competence of advisers to make nutrient recommendations, based on standards set by the *Australasian Soil and Plant Analysis Council*. The standards cover the process of making recommendations, including data collection, soil and plant sampling, and laboratory analysis. Once an adviser has been assessed as competent, they are subject to a biennial audit of their nutrient recommendations to maintain their accredited status.

### ***Certification of Machinery***

The Fertcare *Accu-Spread* program assesses and certifies the spreading width and uniformity of fertilizer spreading machinery. The testing process generates graphs of spreading patterns that inform operators and their customers of the widths at which products are spread – to an acceptable level of variation. Testing is performed by independent contractors, some of whom can also make alterations to the spreader components, to improve performance.

### ***Quality Assurance for Premises***

Fertilizer storage and distribution depots are assessed and audited for the adequacy with which they manage the environmental and occupational health and safety aspects of fertilizer supply.

### **Fertcare Licensing**

Individuals and organizations can obtain a license to use the Fertcare brands, once they have met the necessary conditions. The license system is established to encourage the uptake of training and product stewardship, and to provide a mechanism on which any future government regulation could be based. Most importantly, the licenses aim to provide a strong brand image to government, industry and farmers, which signifies best quality services and product stewardship. A range of logos have been designed for the different parts of the program.

### **Industry Training Targets**

Through the AFSA and FIFA, the industry is committed to achieving and maintaining 100% adoption of Fertcare training by eligible staff. This means that if you fit the definition of eligible staff, you should complete the appropriate level of training within 15 months from your commencement date. **If you don't fit the definition, then you should not provide any advice on the use of fertilizers but should refer to Fertcare trained staff in your organisation.**

Eligible staff are those employed for 15 months or longer:

- who provide advice on fertilizer and soil ameliorant use to end users (this includes those who provide such advice in a sales, advisory or logistic role); or
- who are involved in application of fertilizer and soil ameliorants; or
- who are involved in the storage and handling of fertilizer and soil ameliorants, excluding those who operate facilities covered by an EPA license for nutrient management and who have no contact with end users.

For casual staff: provided that the Fertcare induction training has been provided and that the staff do not go onto farms, then they are not counted as eligible staff.

### **Further Information**

Further information on the Fertcare program can be found in the *Fertcare Handbook*, available from [www.fertcare.com.au](http://www.fertcare.com.au), or by contacting the fertilizer industry on (02) 6230 6987, or [fertilizer@fifa.asn.au](mailto:fertilizer@fifa.asn.au).

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