



FERTCARE®



Fertilizer Industry Federation Of Australia, Inc.
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Australian Fertiliser Services Association Inc.
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Fertcare Handbook

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a detailed description of the framework, rules and operation of the Fertcare program. The handbook is regularly updated as details of the program are changed and if in doubt, you should check with the FIFA office to ensure you have the latest version.

2. Executive Summary

Fertcare is a training, quality assurance, certification and accreditation program delivered by independent third parties on behalf of the fertilizer industry. The various parts of the program are brought together by a licensing system. The program scope includes environment, food safety and occupational health and safety issues associated with fertilizer and soil ameliorant products throughout the supply chain. The industry's objectives are to manage risk and liability and to maintain an effective position in public policy development in these areas. The program focuses on providing high quality advice to users of fertilizers to allow them to maximize productivity and minimize environment and food safety risk.

The **training** program delivers training in managing food safety, environment and occupational health and safety risks associated with the storage, handling and use of fertilizer and soil ameliorant products. Training is delivered at three levels that approximate to the level of knowledge and complexity expected at the logistics, sales and advisor functions. It covers direct responsibilities and the provision of appropriate advice to end users. There is also an induction package that provides new staff with early awareness of the program and their responsibilities.

Fertcare Accu-Spread is a **certification** program that tests the performance of fertilizer spreaders for uniformity of spread pattern.

The Fertcare **Accredited** Advisor program tests the competence of advisors against national competencies and standards and then provides a regular **quality assurance** audit program.

A premises **quality assurance** audit program will be developed that will provide assurance that environment, food safety and occupational health and safety management meets appropriate standards.

The Fertcare **licensing** system seeks to:

- ◆ Encourage the uptake of the training program through licensing of the Fertcare brand;
- ◆ Provide a mechanism to maintain the currency of skills and knowledge of those who have been trained;

The Fertilizer Industry has agreed to implement the Fertcare program on a voluntary basis with a target of 100% compliance by 2010.

If this target is not met voluntarily, the industry will look at mechanisms to ensure compliance. The industry also recognises that external pressures may result in a move to a regulated compliance regime and the intention is to position the Fertcare program to meet this need.

3. Fertcare Training

Fertcare trains industry staff in the competencies required to meet their direct responsibilities for food safety and environmental risk management and in particular, the competency to warn, advise and refer customers to information about the risks and how to manage them. It also develops awareness of occupational health and safety issues associated with fertilizer and soil ameliorant products.

Fertcare is a three-level training program delivered by registered training organisations (RTO's) that meets national competency standards under the Australian Qualifications Framework. Individuals can attain statements of competency by successfully completing the courses and these may be used as part of a formal qualification (eg. Certificate Level III in Rural Operations, which can also include comprehensive training in OH&S requirements). There is also an induction package that provides new staff with early awareness of the program and their responsibilities.

The training program is focused on food safety and environmental risk management but to do this effectively, the program provides appropriate background knowledge and contextual reference at each of the levels (A, B and C). Specific OH&S issues associated with fertilizer storage handling and use are also discussed.

The material covers understanding and managing risk directly, and providing appropriate warning, advice and referral to customers. It is clear that the Level B course in particular, will significantly improve participants' understanding of nutrient related issues and improve their ability to communicate effectively with customers. An incidental benefit is that participants will use this ability to improve their fertilizer sales skills.

The three levels of training have specific objectives and characteristics. After completing a Fertcare training course participants should have an understanding of what each of the levels of training involves and be confident to draw on the skills and knowledge of colleagues who have completed a different level course.

The training material is given local relevance through the assessment process which requires participants to gain an understanding of local issues and programs.

3.1. Level A

Has a strong focus on environment and food safety risk management, particularly in relation to transport, storage and spreading. Level A is targeted at the operational level. It also raises awareness of OH&S issues. The compulsory core module includes a basic understanding of fertilizer and soil ameliorant products including:

- ◆ physical identification;
- ◆ understanding labels;
- ◆ storage and handling characteristics; and
- ◆ the main environment and food safety risks.

Level A also has three elective modules of which at least one must be completed:

- ◆ Spreading;
- ◆ Storage; and
- ◆ Transport.

Other modules for aerial operators and farmers are under consideration.

Level A Part Competency

In some cases, Level A training may be appropriate for people who supervise others who perform the various logistical roles – but don't actually perform the roles themselves. In such cases, it is not possible for that person to be assessed as competent in the logistical areas. In these cases the applicant must be assessed as 'competent' in Basic Product Knowledge, and attend the training workshop for one of the elective units, Spreading, Storage or Transport, the assessment tasks for these units do not need to be completed.

People wishing to undertake the Part Competency option, must inform the trainer when applying for training as there will be differences in pricing and assessment.

3.2. Level B

Level B is focussed on developing underpinning knowledge of nutrient issues relating to environment and food safety. It provides basic education in plant nutrition, designed to enable personnel to improve communication with their customers and provide warnings and simple advice, or to refer customers to Level C trained staff where appropriate. It can be combined with company-specific training to deliver effective sales skills as well as meeting stewardship objectives. Level B will also cover logistics and OHS issues at an awareness level. The major subject areas covered at a medium level of complexity are:

- ◆ Soils and nutrients;
- ◆ Fertilizers;
- ◆ Application methods;
- ◆ Environment & food safety;
- ◆ Regulation;
- ◆ Sampling;
- ◆ Logistics; and
- ◆ Occupational health and safety.

3.3. Level C

Fertcare Level C training covers the environment and food safety competencies required at the advisor level. Competencies in providing detailed nutrient advice based on soil and plant testing should have been attained through other education and training programs.

Level C provides training that covers a detailed and complex knowledge of:

- ◆ Environmental issues;
- ◆ Fertilizer environmental stewardship review methodology (FESR);
- ◆ Food safety issues;
- ◆ Sampling;
- ◆ The regulatory framework and label requirements; and
- ◆ Awareness of OH&S and stewardship issues in transport, storage, handling and application of fertilizers.

Level C is a prerequisite for application to become a Fertcare Accredited Advisor.

3.4. Integration with Agsafe Training Requirements

Agsafe manages an accreditation program for the agricultural and veterinary chemicals industry that requires regular and ongoing training and accreditation. Completing either Level B or Level C Fertcare training will meet the requirements for Agsafe re-accreditation.

3.5. Refresher Training

It is envisaged that a refresher training activity will be required every two years subsequent to the initial training at level A, B or C. This part of the program is currently under development but is likely to be completed by web or other distance based delivery.

3.6. Training Delivery

Level A is currently delivered as a series of half day workshops (1 per module) combined with workplace assessment involving a work based supervisor and the completion of worksheets and log books. A pilot program to develop a distance education process for achieving Level A is underway.

A minimum of two (and up to four) units of competency can be completed in obtaining a Level A Fertcare certificate. These units can be completed on a stand alone basis or as part of the Certificate III in Rural Operations.

Level B is delivered as a CD tutorial (between 10 and 20 hours of self paced learning) and a one day workshop and assessment. The workshop and assessment includes competency based assessments and role plays. A distance education process for achieving Level B is underway.

Level C is delivered as a self paced reading and workbook exercise followed by a one day workshop.

4. Fertcare Accredited Advisor

To become a Fertcare Accredited Advisor, applicants must have completed Fertcare Level C training.

Applicants submit examples of nutrient management plans developed from soil and plant test data and these are assessed against a range of standards.

The standards are set by the Australasian Soil and Plant Analysis Council (ASPAC) and are mapped to national competencies.

Standards cover the process of making recommendations, the underlying data that supports the recommendation, sampling methodology and laboratory competence. Recommendations are tested for completeness and for appropriate management of environment and food safety risk. The standards are based on accepted scientific consensus with ASPAC providing advice on any dispute or review.

Once an advisor has been assessed as competent they are then subject to a biennial audit of randomly selected recommendations made in the preceding two year period. The audit is a quality assurance process to ensure that the competence is being routinely applied and provides mechanisms to improve and rectify any underperformance.

Both the assessment of competence and the biennial audit can be assessed either on an individual applicant basis or on a systems basis.



For a system to be successfully assessed it must be capable of demonstrating that the standards that apply to individuals are systematically applied to all users of the system and that appropriate training, assessment and record keeping is maintained. This is further tested by individual assessment of a selection of advisors who use the system.

The Fertcare Accredited Advisor Handbook contains the detailed procedures and standards used in the assessment of competence and biennial audit. The program is delivered by third party contractors and managed by Agsafe.

5. Fertcare Accu-Spread

The Fertcare Accu-Spread program provides a testing and certification program for fertilizer and soil ameliorant spreading machines. The testing process assesses the uniformity of spread and provides graphs that inform operators and their customers of the spread widths at which the machine produces acceptably low variation. This is currently a coefficient of variation of $\leq 15\%$ for fertilizers and $\leq 20\%$ for lime and gypsum.

The program is delivered by third party contractors and managed by Agsafe.



6. Fertcare Premises Quality Assurance

A premises quality assurance program is under development. It will provide a simple risk based approach to identifying and managing environment, food safety and occupational health and safety issues. It is anticipated that the program will involve guidelines and an audit program.



7. Fertcare Licensing

7.1. Objectives

- 7.1.1. To encourage uptake of training and product stewardship activities throughout the industry.

This is the major thrust of the industry's intention to manage food safety and environmental issues. The intention is to ensure that we are managing the issue appropriately and to use this commitment to ensure full involvement in public policy development and implementation.

- 7.1.2. To provide a mechanism on which any future regulation or co-regulation regime can be based.

It is anticipated that either internal or external pressures will result in a need for greater regulation of the fertilizer industry to ensure that environment and food safety issues are being appropriately managed. The intention is to ensure that the Fertcare licensing system

is robust and effective and implemented at a rate that will make it impossible to ignore as the key mechanism for any additional regulation.

- 7.1.3. To develop a strong brand that is widely understood by public policy makers and agencies, by the fertilizer industry, and by end-user customers

Communication of the Fertcare program to a range of stakeholders is a critical part of ensuring that the reputation of the industry for credible and responsible involvement in managing issues is maintained and strengthened.

The Fertcare brand will provide a nationally recognised image for best practice fertilizer supply, advice and application.

7.2. Structure

The licensing system will allow defined use of the Fertcare brands. The license conditions are based on the Fertcare training program, quality assurance of advisors and premises and certification of application equipment. Licensing will be available to individuals and to organisations.

7.2.1. Individuals

- ◆ Individuals who complete Fertcare training receive a certificate incorporating the Fertcare Training brand; this is independent of licensing and confers no right to use the brand except by displaying the certificate.
- ◆ Individuals who complete the requirements of the Fertcare Accredited Advisor program and enter into a license agreement can use the Fertcare Advisor brand on personal stationary and in defined advertising and promotion. Where an individual works for a business that is licensed then a separate individual license is not required.

7.2.2. Organisations



A business that meets all the requirements of the program and has signed a license agreement can use the Fertcare logos on signage, stationary and advertising across their business subject to defined usage as described in the Fertcare Style Guide, including that:

- ◆ Individuals employed by the business who meet the requirements of the Fertcare Accredited Advisor program can use the advisor logo.
- ◆ Spreader machinery that meets the requirements of the Accu-Spread program can use the Fertcare Accu-Spread logo.
- ◆ Premises that have met the requirements of the premises quality assurance program can use the Fertcare Premises logo.
- ◆ Defined usage specifically precludes use of the Fertcare brand with the term advisor or advisor unless it is specifically referring to the availability of Fertcare Accredited Advisors.

The license is issued for a period of two years with renewal based on continuing to meet the requirements of the program including refresher training, biennial audit of advisors and currency of Accu-Spread certification and premises audit.

7.3. Licensing Criteria and Requirements

Licensing is based on meeting requirements for:

- ◆ Staff induction;
- ◆ Training;
- ◆ Maintaining currency of knowledge and skills (when introduced);
- ◆ Premises quality assurance (when introduced); and
- ◆ For application contractors, machinery calibration through Accu-Spread.

The following table summarizes the accreditation requirements which are explained in more detail in the following text:

	2008	2009	2010	2011
New staff receive Fertcare Induction	100%*	100%	100%	100%
Eligible Staff Fertcare Trained	50%	70%	100%	100%
Spreaders Accu-Spread Certified	50%	50%	100%	100%
Training Refresher Completed		50%	100%	100%
Eligible Premises Audited	To be developed			
* From 1-11-2008				

7.3.1. New staff receive Fertcare Induction Training

Any staff who may have contact with customers regarding any aspect of fertilizer including purely administrative functions should receive the Fertcare induction package as part of company induction. The Fertcare induction package describes Fertcare and states that those not eligible for Fertcare training should not provide any fertilizer use advice. It is anticipated that this restriction be incorporated into company policies.

7.3.2. Eligible staff Fertcare trained

The measure is the number of eligible staff who have successfully completed the Fertcare training program at the appropriate level as a percentage of total eligible staff.

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 casual staff are not counted as eligible staff.

The decision as to which level of training is appropriate is the responsibility of the business.

Those who have completed the AFSA Level A training prior to it achieving registered status with an RTO will qualify as Fertcare trained for the initial grant of a license but will have to complete competency assessment prior to the first renewal.

7.3.3. Trained staff refreshed/quality assured

To maintain licenses of individuals, locations and organizations, eligible staff will be required to complete periodic refresher activities currently envisaged as every 2 years. These serve the purpose of reinforcing the need to put into practice the skills and knowledge learned in the original course and to ensure their skills and knowledge are in accord with the latest developments. Re-accreditation will also maintain the currency of our database records.

Level A

For those completing Level A training prior to it achieving registered status, the initial refresher will involve workplace assessment against the competencies to meet the requirements of the RTO. This must be completed within two years of the premises/organization entering into the initial license agreement.

For those completing Level A training that meets the RTO requirements a refresher training program is being developed that will most likely involve distance based training and assessment primarily by web modules.

Level B

For Level B, a refresher training program is being developed that will most likely involve distance based training and assessment primarily by web modules. Participants would be expected to refer to the Level B CD resource to complete the assessment.

Level C

For Level C, a refresher training program is being developed that will most likely involve distance based training and assessment primarily by web modules. Participants would be expected to refer to the Level C resource material to complete the assessment.

7.3.4. Eligible Premises Audited

A premises quality assurance audit program will be developed in consultation with members. The intention is to have a program agreed by 30 December 2008 for phased implementation.

The principles will be to:

- ◆ Assist companies to manage environment, food safety and occupational health and safety risks associated with fertilizer and soil ameliorant products.
- ◆ Ensure compliance with regulations relating to fertilizer and soil ameliorant products.

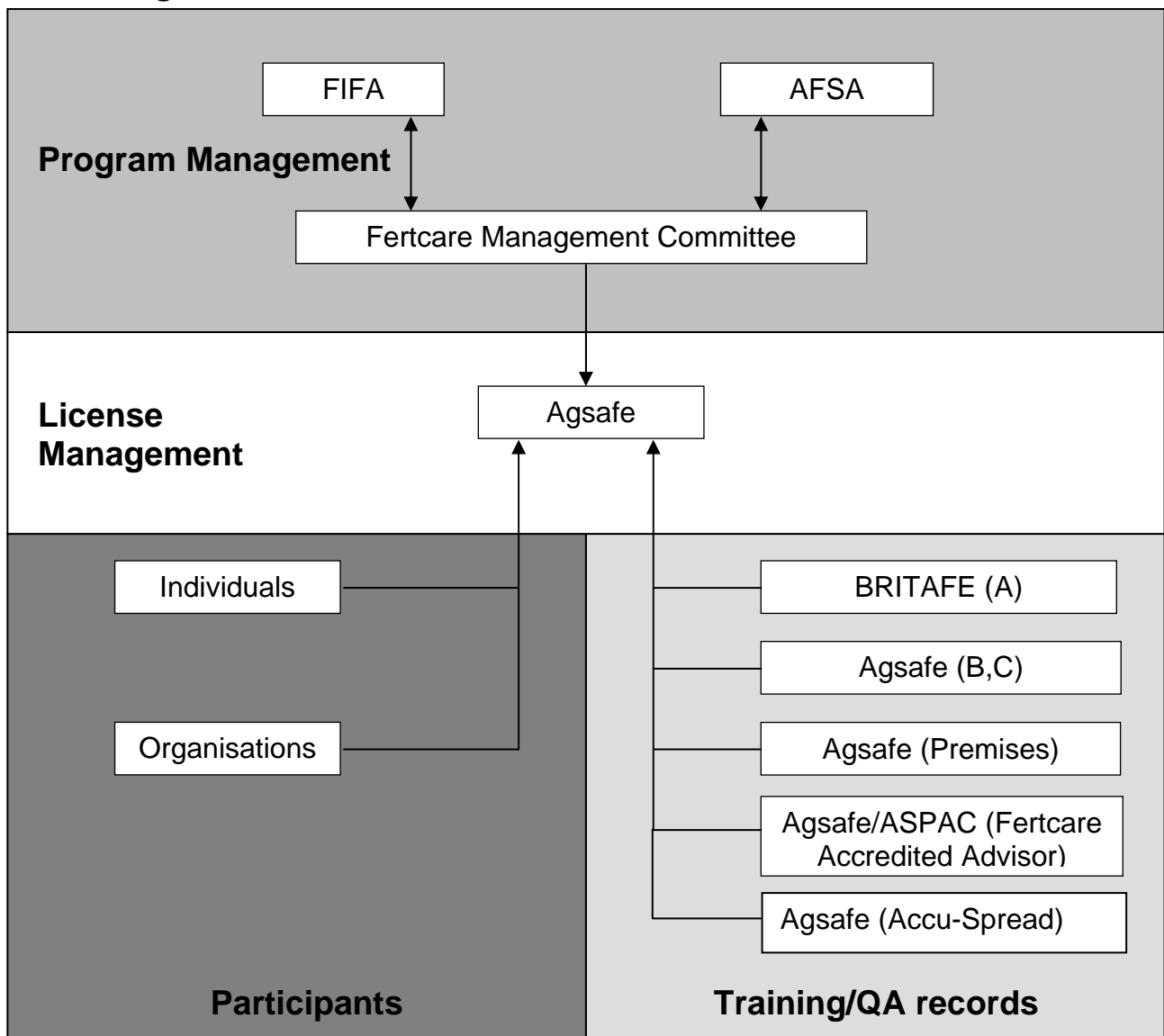
7.3.5. Spreaders Fertcare Accu-Spread certified

The Accu-Spread program certifies the pattern and width of spreading machinery within accepted best practice tolerances (15% co-efficient of variation for fertilizer and 20% for soil ameliorants). Certification is for three years and re-certification must be completed before the end of the third year following initial testing.

8. Organizational Structure

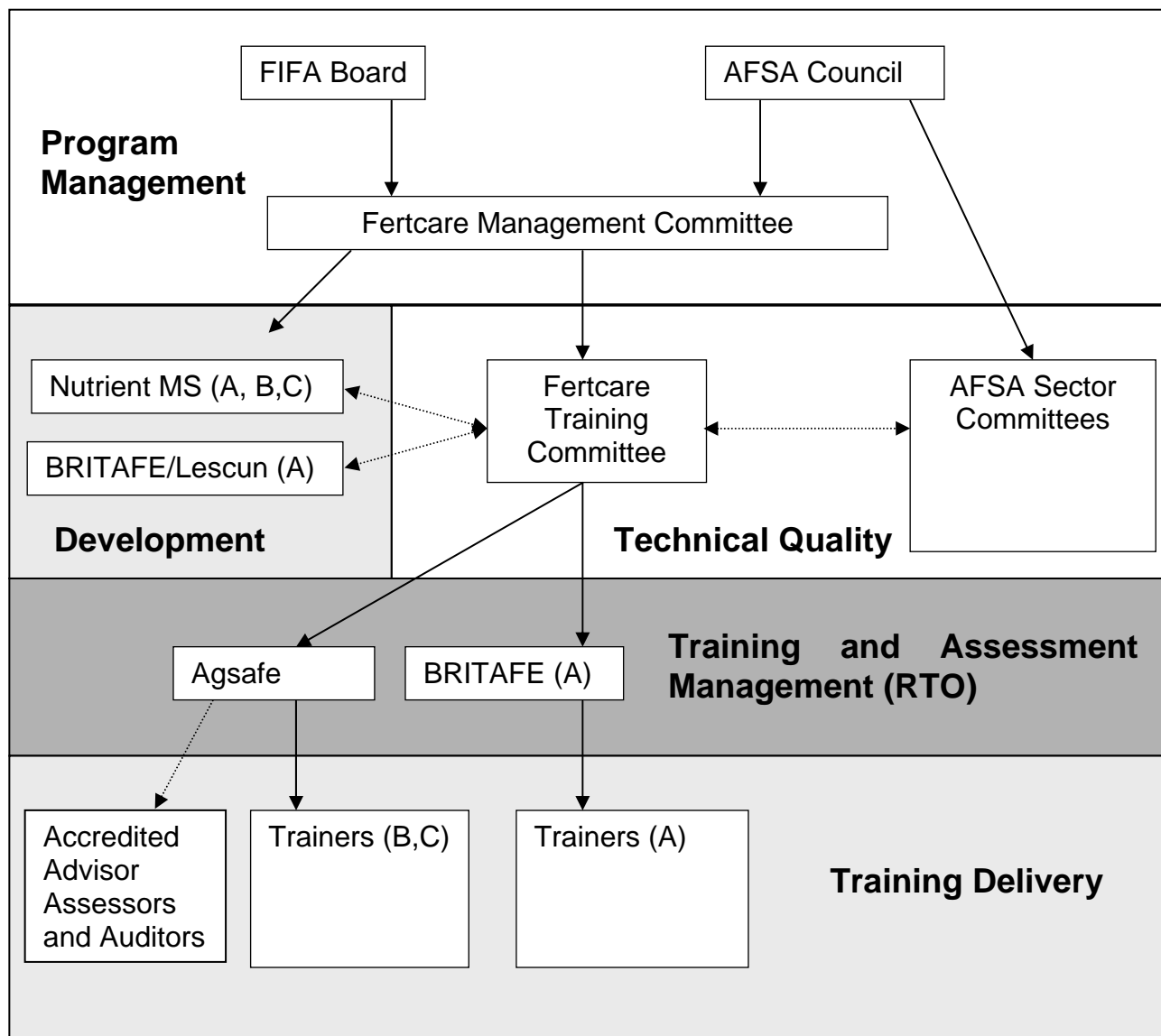
A management structure and various contracted parties are in place to develop, manage and deliver the training, certification, quality assurance and licensing (see below). The Fertcare Management Committee is the manager of the Fertcare Program. The Committee is made up of two representatives each from the FIFA Board and AFSA Council.

8.1. Management Structure



Agsafe is the licensing body, working under the direction of the Fertcare Management Committee. Individuals and businesses would initially apply to Agsafe for a licence which would be determined based on them meeting the requirements of the program.

8.2. Training Structure



The Fertcare Training Committee plays a major role in developing and modifying the content and quality of training courses.

9. Costs & Access

The training and accreditation programs are delivered by a range of public and private providers. The Fertcare Management Committee will work with those providers to ensure that the objectives of the programs are met whilst providing the best possible value to members. Members are encouraged to discuss their requirements with providers and take advantage of opportunities to reduce costs or add value by combining Fertcare training with other training or activities.

Training courses and provider contact details are listed at www.fertcare.com.au. To register for a course or to enquire about future course dates, contact the providers directly.

10. Standards and Criteria for Trainers & Assessors

Standards for qualifications and experience of Fertcare trainers and assessors are set by the Fertcare Management Committee in consultation with service providers. The criteria include consideration of the demand for services as well as the qualifications and experience of the applicants.

The standards and qualifications include those set by the registered training organizations engaged by the program and those set by the Fertcare Management Committee.

10.1. Trainers

The Fertcare Management Committee sets standards and business rules for the appointment of trainers.

To deliver Fertcare training and assessment:

- ◆ A Certificate IV in workplace assessment and training is a pre-requisite.
- ◆ Minimum 5 years experience in a specialist fertilizer / nutrition role relevant to the level being delivered.
- ◆ For Level A, the trainer must have satisfactorily completed Level B or Level C;
- ◆ For Level B, the trainer must have satisfactorily completed Level C; and
- ◆ For Level C, the trainer must have satisfactorily completed Level C.

A clear case must be presented that there is either:

- ◆ Sufficient unmet demand to ensure that the trainer will conduct a minimum of 6 courses per annum; or
- ◆ Sufficient demand from particular clients that supports the appointment of a trainer.

Internal company trainers will be accepted subject to meeting the conditions above. However, they will be subject to a higher frequency of audit by the RTO and this cost will be borne by the company involved. Internal company trainers include a trainer employed by a company and used to train agents or dealers of the company.

10.2. Accu-Spread Assessors

To become an Accu-Spread Assessor, applicants must complete training and assessment, through Agsafe, that covers the procedures and analysis of the testing process.

Sufficient unmet demand must be demonstrated to ensure that the assessor will conduct a minimum of 10 calibrations per annum.

10.3. Premises Auditors

To be developed, based on the Agsafe model.

10.4. Fertcare Accredited Advisor Assessors and Auditors

As detailed in the Fertcare **Accredited Adviser Manual**

11. Detailed Procedures and Forms

The administration of the program is further defined in a range of detailed procedures and forms available from FIFA on request. The current list of documents is:

- ◆ Accu-Spread Application Form
- ◆ Accu-Spread Process and Procedures
- ◆ Fertcare Accredited Advisor Assessor and Auditor Guide (and Application Form)
- ◆ Fertcare Accredited Advisor Program Manual
- ◆ Fertcare Level A Process and Procedures
- ◆ Fertcare Licence Application Form
- ◆ Fertcare Licence Renewal Form
- ◆ Fertcare Trainer Application Form