

# The Fertilizer

News and information from the Fertilizer Industry Federation of Australia



F I F A

## FIFA Member Sales Statistics 2005

Each year, FIFA members contribute to the collection of industry sales statistics. This set of data is an important part of the industry's commitment to issues of food safety and environment. Data is provided to State and Federal Government Agencies to inform discussions on these issues with accurate measures of nutrient and impurities supplied in fertilizer products. A summary of the key data is presented. [More...](#)

## Australia's Role in the International Fertilizer Association (IFA)

IFA is the peak body for the world fertilizer industry. It is involved at an international level in many of the issues that FIFA deals with in Australia. It is well established that trends in food safety or environmental risk management in Europe and the USA tend to influence policy in Australia. The FIFA Board is reviewing the involvement of FIFA in the activities of IFA and has nominated Australian representatives to some of the key committees of IFA. [More...](#)

## Fertcare Hits 1000 – But There is More to Do

Over 1000 people have now been trained by the Fertcare program. 13 businesses and 31 premises are now licensed to use the Fertcare Logos in promoting their business and the program so now its time for everyone else to act. [More...](#)

## Fertcare Promotion – Recognition Gains Pace

The features and benefits of Fertcare have been widely promoted since the launch of the program in October 2005. [More...](#)

## Fertcare Accredited Advisor – A Welcome Standard

A recent survey conducted by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) confirms that growers value good advice but find it hard to identify the good from the questionable. The Fertcare Accredited Advisor program will provide an independent quality assured process that will give growers confidence in the quality of the advice they receive. [More...](#)

## Workshop Improves Advice for Banana Growers

With the assistance of Stewart Lindsay (Qld Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries), a special workshop of fertilizer resellers and agronomists was convened to explain the latest information on N, P and K rates for bananas. [More...](#)

## In Brief – A Roundup of Other News and Coming Events

2007 Industry Conference, impurities study, new Board Member, security regulations, Fertcare web site, FIFA AGM, nutrient accounting in the dairy industry and the AFSA National Convention. [More...](#)

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## FIFA Member Sales Statistics 2005

In 2005, total fertilizer sales were 5.7 million tonnes which is down 4% on the 2004 figure. Victoria was the only State to record a rise in sales (up 6%), Queensland was steady and the other States were all down with South Australia (down 17%) and Western Australia (down 10%) the most affected. This is illustrated in the 'Product by State' graph.

Single Super was the only solid product to show an increase on 2004, up 3% to 1.3 million tonnes. Liquids were up 8% for the year and now represent 8% of the market (including anhydrous ammonia).

57% of product was produced domestically and 43% imported. However, the domestic figure includes single super which is manufactured from imported phosphate rock.

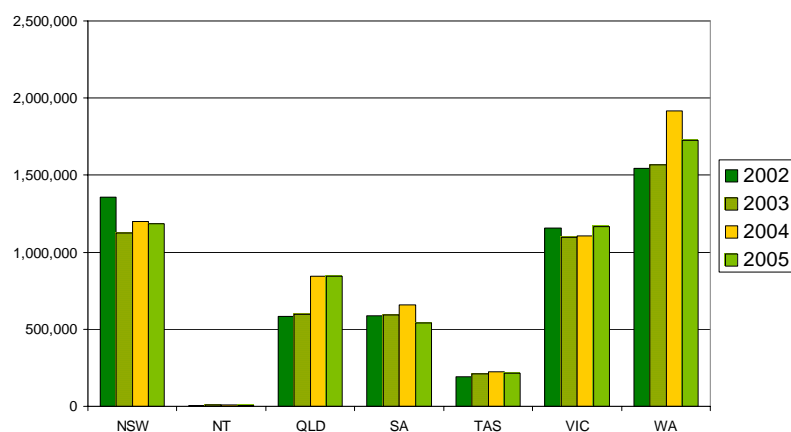
The strong growth trend from 1990 through to 2000 has been much less clear over the five years to 2005, as illustrated in the 'Nutrients (Kt of element)' graph which shows the sales of N, P and K from 1983 to 2005. The current high prices of fertilizers and low prices for agricultural commodities is clearly having a significant effect that has added to the problems of drought during the last five years.

On the positive side, the inputs of cadmium from fertilizer have decreased by 75% since the inception of the National Cadmium Minimisation Strategy, demonstrating the industry's commitment to effectively managing issues of food safety. This reduction has come about through selection of low cadmium rock sources for single superphosphate manufacture, and through increased use of higher analysis phosphorus products.

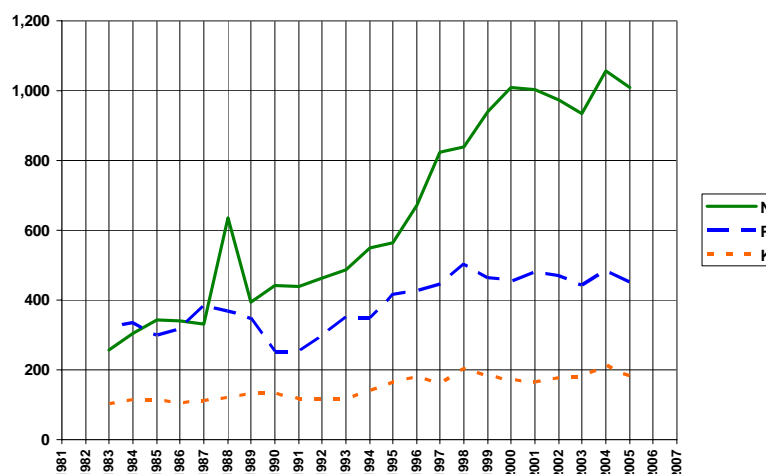
FIFA provides more detailed information on sales statistics on a national and State basis to Government and research agencies on a case by case basis.

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Product by State (t)



Nutrients (Kt of element)



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## Australia's Role in the International Fertilizer Association (IFA)

IFA is the peak international body for the fertilizer industry. Its mission is; to actively promote efficient and responsible production and use of plant nutrients to maintain and increase agricultural production worldwide in a sustainable manner; and to improve the operating environment of the fertilizer industry in the spirit of free enterprise and fair trade. IFA collects information and provides a discussion forum for its members.

[www.fertilizer.org](http://www.fertilizer.org)



IFA is involved in many international forums in which issues relevant to Australia are discussed. In fact, FIFA represented IFA at the OECD workshop on water and agriculture held in Adelaide last year. IFA has a professional secretariat but, like FIFA, it relies on contributions from its members to populate the various committees that set and develop policy and provide input to external forums. The FIFA Board has recently nominated people to positions on some of these committees.



**Daryl Roe** and **John Lewis** will represent Australia on the IFA Council which sets overall policy and direction in the same way as the FIFA Board.

**Peter McEwen** and **Nick Drew** will join the Agriculture Committee which has the objectives of:

- promoting the efficient and balanced use of fertilizers;
- developing and expanding authoritative fertilizer demand forecasts; and
- improving the public image of fertilizers.



About every three years, the Committee organizes an Agriculture Conference, which addresses a mix of technical, economic and policy issues, which relate to food production, human health, the environment and market development.



**James Whiteside** and **Jeff Landels** will join the Production and International Trade Committee (PIT). Twice a year, the committee provides a global assessment of fertilizer supply and trade. Factors affecting fertilizer supply and trade policy changes are communicated to members on an ongoing basis. Statistics are compiled quarterly, semi-annually and annually, depending on the products involved, for a total of more than 40 reports per year. Four specialized working parties (dealing with ammonia and derived products, phosphate, potash and sulphur) assist in the preparation of these statistics.



In addition, IFA has Regional Vice Presidents who sit on the Council to represent a geographic region. **Rodney Green** from Ravensdown Fertilizers in New Zealand currently represents Oceania.

Pictured top to bottom, Daryl Roe, John Lewis, Peter McEwen, Nick Drew, Jeff Landels, Rodney Green.

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## Fertcare Hits 1000 – But There is More to Do



Fertcare training is continuing around the country and there are now 472 people trained at Level A, 325 at Level B and 210 at Level C to take the total to 1007.

This is great news for the industry and for our farmer customers. It means that over 1000 people have a good understanding of the food safety and environmental risks posed by fertilizers and can provide the most up to date advice and services. Efficiency of use is integral to reducing environmental risk so the advice and services are also the best available for productivity and profitability.



It's not only industry personnel who are recognising the value of the training with private consultants, Bureau of Sugar Experimental Station (BSES) advisors, sugar company staff, TAFE lecturers, Victorian DPI staff and corporate farmers completing Fertcare training.

The program is also gaining recognition amongst industry groups, catchment managers and Government departments. Programs like the Dairy Industry's environmental self assessment tool (DairySAT) recommend the use of businesses and people who participate in the Fertcare program.



To make the most of the program Fertcare Accreditation allows businesses and individual advisors to use the Fertcare logos to promote their business as a provider of best practice advice and services. Once a business meets the requirements of the program with regard to staff training and machinery certification (Accu-Spread) they can apply for a license to use the program logos.

The current requirements are for 45% of eligible staff to be trained at the appropriate level and 75% of spreading machines to be Accu-Spread tested. In 2007 this will rise to 70% of staff and 100% of machines and in 2008 it will be 100%

for staff and machines. As new parts of the program like the premises audit and advisor audit are introduced they will become part of the requirements. The licence is granted on the basis that the business meets the current requirements and lasts for two years. At the time of renewal, the business has to meet the requirements at that time.

There are currently 13 businesses covering 31 premises licensed to use the Fertcare logos. As the program gathers momentum and recognition, businesses are encouraged to ask "Shouldn't we be accredited?" The answer is clearly yes and the application form is available at [www.fertcare.com.au](http://www.fertcare.com.au)

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## Fertcare Promotion – Recognition Gains Pace

The features and benefits of Fertcare have been widely promoted since the launch of the program in October 2005. Most recently, FIFA staff have made presentations at the Chemcert Conference, Queensland Farmers Federation conference and the launch of the Heytesbury Dairy Action Program.

The Chemcert conference was held over two days and keeps their trainers up to date with developments in the areas of agricultural chemical management and regulation, training methods and general developments in agricultural issues. Over 200,000 agricultural industry personnel have been trained by Chemcert and trainers at the conference can now pass on to their farmer customers the value and importance of Fertcare.

The themes for the Queensland Farmers Federation Conference were 'sustainability' and 'partnerships' and the Fertcare message achieved 'ticks in both boxes'.

The opportunity to talk about Fertcare at the Heytesbury Dairy Action Program (HDAP) launch was timely, for at least two reasons. Firstly, the HDAP encourages farmers to use the recently released 'Dairy Self Assessment Tool'. Dairy SAT provides checklists and guides to help farmers address environmental issues. In the nutrient section of Dairy SAT, growers are encouraged to calibrate their fertilizer spreaders, or use an Accu-Spread accredited machine. They are also encouraged to find out about acceptable application rates from a Fertcare accredited supplier.

The second reason is that a very new AFSA member had the opportunity to promote his recently accredited spreading machine – as one of the very few in the district. Hawkes Transport provided a spreader and driver for the Accu-Spread demonstration, overseen by Accu-Spread tester Russell Nichol. Nearly 50 farmers and representatives from local government, catchment management, Landcare, Victorian Government and industry bodies attended the launch and field day.



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## Workshop Improves Advice for Banana Growers



FIFA received \$100,000 from the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust to promote best practice fertilizer use with farmers in north Queensland. Horticulturalists and graziers working in the catchments of the Great Barrier Reef have been receiving free soil tests and interpretations, and attending technical workshops. The workshops have been run by Nutrient Management Systems, with significant input from industry and government experts. FIFA members have collected soil samples and undertaken the interpretations. The importance of using Fertcare accredited suppliers and advisers was a key message of the program.

In delivering the horticultural workshops, it became evident that the nutrient advice being given to banana farmers was variable – and sometimes conflicting. Recent research by the Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water (DNRMW) has shown that nitrogen application rates can be significantly reduced from the rates being applied on a number of farms – without any loss in productivity.

With the assistance of Stewart Lindsay (Qld Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries), a special workshop of fertilizer resellers and agronomists was convened to explain the latest information on N, P and K rates for bananas. The workshop was held at the Qld Government's agricultural research station at South Johnstone – which we hope withstood the ravages of Cyclone Larry. The workshop was attended by more than 20 nutrient advisers from 14 different companies. Combined, these agronomists service a major proportion of the banana farms in north Queensland, and have a significant influence on nutrient application rates.

Two key presentations were made at the workshop, one by Dr John Armour from DNRMW, and one by Stewart Lindsay. Martin Shafron from FIFA introduced the workshop and explained why it was being held – in the context of the NHT-funded project.

At the workshop, participants agreed the value of regular updates on the latest developments in nutrition advice etc, and acknowledged the need for similar workshops on other crop types. The workshop also identified areas where the currency and availability of information could be improved:

- A better understanding of the target levels for phosphorus in soils, to minimize off-site risk and maintain productivity, recognizing the influence of the P buffer index
- Information on the latest NPK recommended rates for all crops should be more readily available, and perhaps accessible through the FIFA website.

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## Fertcare Accredited Advisor – A Welcome Standard

A recent survey conducted by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) confirms that growers value good advice on plant nutrition but find it hard to identify the good from the questionable. The Fertcare Accredited Advisor program will provide an independent quality assured process that will give growers confidence in the quality of the advice they receive.

Advisors are at the heart of the Fertcare program, they provide detailed advice to users, usually based on soil and plant analysis and help to develop the district best practice recommendations that inform the Level A and B training. Advisors also act as mentors for those who complete the Level A and B courses.

Advisor



**FERTCARE®**

There are three parts to attaining and maintaining Fertcare Accredited Advisor status. Level C Fertcare training covers environment and food safety issues and includes an environmental risk assessment methodology. It doesn't cover the technical skills and processes required to provide good soil and plant test interpretations. These skills and processes are learnt either through company programs or in higher education and subsequent experience.

The Fertcare program will have a recognition of prior competence (ROPC) procedure to assess whether the company program or individual skills meet an acceptable standard.

Once you have completed the Level C training and met the ROPC standards you will become a Fertcare Accredited Advisor. If your business is licensed under the Fertcare Accreditation program you can start using the Advisor logo as allowed under the license conditions. If your business is not accredited, then you can apply for a license as an individual.

Once licensed, Fertcare Advisors are subject to a regular third party audit to ensure that the skills and knowledge are being applied consistently to provide best practice advice.

Leading scientists in the field of plant nutrition, Dr Doug Reuter and Dale Lewis, and plant nutrition education and training specialists Nutrient Management Systems have developed a set of standards for soil and plant test interpretation, and processes for the ROPC and audit. The standards have been overseen by a committee of the Australasian Soil and Plant Analysis Council. The material is now undergoing the final approval process and the ROPC component should be available soon after publication of this newsletter. All those who have completed Level C Fertcare training will be notified when the ROPC is available.

The rigorous third party process and the involvement of respected scientists in the design of the program should give users confidence that a Fertcare Accredited Advisor can be trusted to give good advice on plant nutrition. With effective promotion, Fertcare Accredited Advisor will become a trusted sign of excellent advice.

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## AFSA 2006 Conference

The 2006 AFSA National Conference will be held from Tuesday 8 August to Thursday 10 August 2006, at the Lakes Resort Hotel in Adelaide. Details of the program are under development but members may want to mark these dates in their diaries. Invitations to provide various levels of sponsorship are expected to be called for soon and you may wish to consider this opportunity. Contact Vincent Boseley (08) 8577-8101.

## Accu-Spread Accredited Machines now part of the Fertcare Website

As part of the improvements being made to the Fertcare website, the full list of Accu-Spread accredited machines is now available at [www.fertcare.com.au](http://www.fertcare.com.au). This will allow the general public to identify who has accredited machines in their district and who doesn't. A full list of Fertcare accredited business will soon be added to the website. The website also has details of the training and accreditation program, course dates and license application forms.

## Impurities Study Delayed

Stage 2 of the study into prohibited substances and guideline limits for certain impurities in fertilizers was to have gone to tender at the end of 2005. However, funding arrangements between the two intergovernmental groups sponsoring the project have not been agreed and the tender is on hold pending a satisfactory agreement. FIFA is part of the Fertilizer Working Group which will oversee the project and members will be informed as soon as there is any further development.

## Security Still an Issue

Regulation of SSAN products is now in place in all States except Western Australia which has just released a package of regulation, including for SSAN products, for public consultation. The package is available at [www.docep.wa.gov.au](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au)

Evaluation of a study into explosive precursors is still underway within the Federal and State Governments and we expect to be consulted later this year. Several fertilizer products are included in the long list of common products that can be used to manufacture explosives. FIFA will try to ensure that a measured approach is taken to any further controls.

## FIFA Dates for Your Diary

This years AGM will follow last years very successful format with a formal meeting, an informative forum on industry issues and a choice of social activities for that important networking. Save the dates, September 7 and 8.

2007 will see the next Australian Fertilizer Industry International Conference in the week of August 6-10, you won't want to miss it so put it in your diary now.

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