

# The Fertilizer

News and information from the Fertilizer Industry Federation of Australia



## **Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference, FIFA AGM and Changes to the Board**

A packed program at the second Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference covered all the areas of current FIFA activity and many of the excellent papers and presentations are now available. The FIFA AGM was held in conjunction with the conference and a new Chairman elected. [More...](#)

## **Fertcare Review – Strong Endorsement – But More to Do**

Fertcare is influencing the advice provided to fertilizer users, is a high quality program and participants would recommend it to their colleagues. Uptake is not yet high enough and there are other recommendations for improvement. [More...](#)

## **Fertcare in Bahrain**

Leading suppliers of urea to the Australian market, GPIC and PIC were so impressed with what they heard about Fertcare at the Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference they organised for a course to be run in Bahrain. [More...](#)

## **Fertilizer Policy Framework and Farmer Competency Studies Commence**

Public interest means fertilizer application will come under increasing scrutiny. Two current projects ensure that the fertilizer industry will maintain its strong position in the development of public policy. [More...](#)

## **FIFA Wins Regional Quarantine Award**

The work that FIFA members and their supply chain partners have done to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of quarantine controls for imported fertilizers has been recognised with a prestigious award. [More...](#)

## **New Code of Practice for Description & Labelling of Fertilizers**

A draft Code of Practice for the description and labelling of fertilizers has been released for widespread consultation. Following consultation it is expected that this will become the Australian Standard. [More...](#)

## **Fertilizer Contaminants Study Data Collection**

Phase two of a study into possible contaminants of fertilizers that may represent food safety or environmental risks has commenced. FIFA members have begun supplying available information to the CSIRO study group who will then decide how to fill in the gaps. [More...](#)

## **AFSA Conference**

With keen interest in fertilizer regulatory developments in Western Australia, the 2008 AFSA conference in Perth should have widespread relevance. [More...](#)

## **Climate Change – Carbon Trading – Fertilizer**

Nitrous oxide emissions, energy consumption, changes to agriculture and carbon credits will have big effects on our industry. [More...](#)

## **Industry Environment Awards**

The annual FIFA Environment Awards were presented at the Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference. [More...](#)

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## Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference, FIFA AGM and Changes to the Board



Despite the delightful setting it wasn't all sun surf and sand at the second Australian Fertilizer Industry conference. The 200 delegates gave the program the best possible thumbs up by attending every session of the two day main program.

The program covered all of the strategic issues on the FIFA agenda and also included sessions on market analysis and application technology and issues. Sessions on Global Warming and Fertilizer Impurities highlighted issues that will be increasingly important over the next few years. The importance of environmental management and effective engagement in public policy was reinforced in the opening session and our continuing efforts in effective quarantine were recognised by speakers and in award ceremonies.

To keep delegates fit, happy and fresh we also had speakers on health, life and work, a comedian and an inspirational talk about the Great Barrier Reef which is a focus of our nutrient management initiatives.

A marvellous 'night of the stars' saw recognition of FIFA Environment Award Winners, the AFSA Presidents award and the Awarding of quarantine certificates and commendations.

Most of the excellent papers and presentations are available from the FIFA web site in the publications section.

### New Board

The FIFA AGM was held at the conference. Keen interest in the association ensured that we required an election for Board members and we welcome the successful candidates:

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rod Abbott, AFSA          | Peter Cameron, Mosaic     |
| Peter Davey, Hi-Fert      | Darryl Dent, CSBP         |
| Mark Drew*, Incitec Pivot | David Ford, Impact        |
| John Lewis, Agrow         | Peter McEwen, Summit      |
| Brett Smith, Elders       | Alistair Steven, Landmark |
| Stephen Wolfe, Tennant    |                           |

\*Subsequently replaced by James Whiteside.

David Ford (*left*) was elected as the new Chairman and Darryl Dent as Vice Chair.

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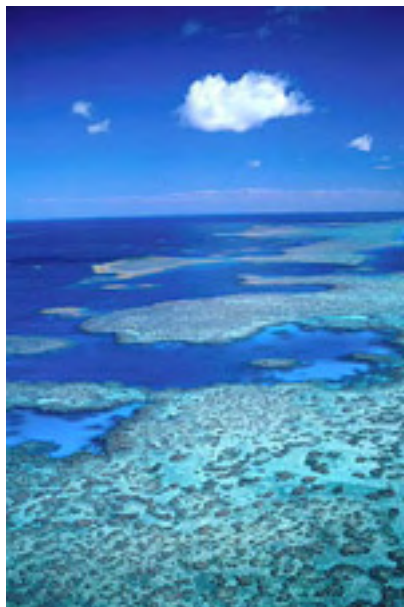


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## Fertcare Review – Strong Endorsement – But More to Do



The final report on the evaluation of the Fertcare Program has been received from the consultant, Tim Cummins and Associates. The report was funded through the Australian Greenhouse Office, and aimed to determine how effective Fertcare has been in improving the efficiency of fertilizer use. The focus of the evaluation was on the catchments of the Great Barrier Reef, although the findings and recommendations have implications for the whole of Australia.

In summary, the report notes that:

***The Fertcare program has been effective in improving the skills and knowledge of people who supply, apply or provide advice on fertilizers and soil ameliorants. In this way, Fertcare helps to reduce the ecological and human health impacts resulting from the manufacture, storage, distribution and use of the fertilizer industry's products.***

Other report findings are:

- The training materials are demonstrably fit-for-purpose, and participants in the training courses report a high degree of satisfaction with them.
- The statistically valid survey demonstrates conclusively that Fertcare

training influences the advice provided to farmers about nutrient management. This is especially true for those participants who have not studied agriculture at the tertiary level or who have not previously completed formal training in nutrient management.

- Overwhelmingly, participants say they would recommend Fertcare to other members of the fertilizer industry.
- Fertcare is generally seen as providing the foundation for any potential regulatory regime.
- The uptake of Fertcare in the ten priority catchments of the Great Barrier Reef has been low – in the five priority catchments north of Townsville it is less than 15% of the intended participants.

The report also recommends that the industry:

- Institutes a formal three-yearly review of Fertcare training materials.
- Develops a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement framework for Fertcare.
- Revises Fertcare targets to accommodate the underlying level of staff 'churn' in the fertilizer industry.
- Accelerates Fertcare adoption in the Great Barrier Reef catchments.
- Reviews and changes the Fertcare service delivery model.
- Defers any decision on extending Fertcare to farmers until the revised targets for the existing program are on track.

The report recommendations will be considered and addressed by the Fertcare Management Committee as part of a comprehensive review of the program during 2008.

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## Fertcare in Bahrain



At the Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference Mr Jawahery, General Manager of GPIC, recognised the importance of environmental issues in the Australian market and discussed the possibility of FIFA delivering a Fertcare course to GPIC and PIC staff. Arrangements were duly made, including contracting Nutrient Management Systems (NMS) to modify the Fertcare Level B course for international delivery. FIFA Chairman, David Ford, and Executive Manager, Nick Drew, accompanied NMS trainer Wayne Pluske to Bahrain in early December to deliver a mixture of Fertcare Level B training and some more general information about the Australian market and other important issues such as quarantine and security.

A short introduction to Fertcare and issues facing the Australian Industry was given to a large group of managers from the two companies, and a select group of 14 managers then completed a three day training session in the excellent facilities at the GPIC Club.

In the post course evaluation the participants rated all aspects of the training greater than four on a scale of one to five with some agreement that we could have usefully used five days instead of three.

Mr Jawahery said in an email after the training, "We thank you for sharing with us an overview of the Australian fertiliser industry through the excellent presentation delivered during the Fertcare program. The feedback from the participants was very positive and the information presented was of great interest and importance to them. We would like to also thank Nick and Wayne for redesigning the program to better fit with our requirement. The Australian market is one of the most important markets for our products and programs like Fertcare will enable us to better understand the requirement and further improve our operations."



Whilst in Bahrain FIFA and GPIC staff met the Oil and Gas Affairs Minister, Dr Mirza (*Centre holding plate*) and discussed the active approach that the Australian industry is taking to quarantine and environment issues, and the strong support we are receiving from suppliers like GPIC.

The Minister was presented with an engraved plate commemorating the FIFA visit and the first Fertcare course held outside Australia. Also in the picture from left to right are Nick Drew, David Ford, Abdul Rahman Jawahery, Zuhair Tawfiqi and Jehad Taqi.

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## Fertilizer Policy Framework Project



FIFA has been successful in securing funds from the Australian Government for a project that aims to:

*Identify, review and make recommendations on policy options (including non-regulatory, regulatory and formal accreditation and certification measures) to facilitate best practice in the supply, handling, use and management of agricultural fertilizers to achieve water quality and greenhouse gas abatement objectives.*

The background to the project is the need to explore ways to improve the uptake of industry-based, voluntary programs aimed at improving the efficiency of fertiliser use. The focus is on the catchments of the

Great Barrier Reef (due to the government funding source), but will have wider implications. For example, it is expected that the recent policy being developed in Western Australia will be considered as one possible option for Northern Queensland.

The project will be undertaken under the guidance of a project Steering Committee including representatives from the Australian and Queensland Governments, FIFA (Chair), AFSA, Canegrowers, Growcom and WWF. FIFA and AFSA members will have the opportunity to comment on draft reports and issues as they arise.

## Ferticare Farmer Competencies Project



Through recent legislation and policy documents, governments have indicated an interest in ensuring that users of fertilizer products properly manage the environment and food safety risks that can result.

It seems likely that Governments will eventually require users to demonstrate this competence as a condition of continuing to use fertilizer products.

To prepare for this development in a considered and careful manner AFSA and FIFA have been funded by the Australian Government National Landcare Program Sustainable Industry Initiative to identify the skills and knowledge that fertilizer users should have and to match these to national competency standards.

The project is being undertaken by a consulting team comprising Tim Cummins & Associates, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE and RMCG. In the early stages, drafts of the skills and knowledge will be widely circulated for input from all interested parties. If you would like to be included in this process please contact FIFA at [fertilizer@fifa.asn.au](mailto:fertilizer@fifa.asn.au)

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## FIFA Wins Regional Quarantine Award



*Graham Turner, David Ford, Nick Drew and John Lewis*

FIFA has been awarded for their commitment to Australian quarantine.

The NSW Quarantine Award was presented by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) NSW Regional Manager, Graham Turner recognising FIFA's long standing effort to increase quarantine compliance in the fertiliser import industry.

Glenn Smith, Manager of the AQIS Bulk Import National Coordination Centre in Newcastle, praised FIFA for their work with its members, offshore suppliers and AQIS in setting up safer quarantine systems for the industry.

"Fertilisers are generally used in rural areas, so contaminants such as seeds, soil or plant material present significant quarantine risk to Australian agriculture," Glenn says.

"These contaminants pose a high quarantine risk and may result in the entire shipment being re-exported – a cost that can run into tens of millions of dollars for the importer and cause significant supply constraints for fertiliser users in the agriculture and horticulture sectors."

"Since the introduction of the bulk importation protocol in 2004, no fertiliser shipments have required re-export and no consignments have been imported with contamination," Glenn says.

"The protocols developed by FIFA and AQIS are successful because quarantine risks are managed off-shore. They benefit industry through reduced AQIS inspection costs and through increased confidence in their supply chains. AQIS has also benefited from the protocols. Fewer bulk hold inspections are required, reducing occupational health and safety risks for AQIS officers," Glenn says.

The Quarantine Awards are managed by the Quarantine and Exports Advisory Council and recognise the exceptional efforts of individuals and organisations assisting AQIS to protect Australia's agriculture and environment from exotic pests and diseases.

On behalf of its member companies, FIFA thanks all those in the supply chain who have made such a significant contribution to a more effective and efficient quarantine system for imported fertilizers.

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## New Code of Practice for Description & Labelling of Fertilizers



In Australia, the regulations governing the sale of fertilizers are State Government based resulting in seven different sets of regulations with varying requirements. As most of the fertilizer companies operate in multiple States, harmonisation of these regulations has been a long-term aspiration. Some States are moving to reduce the scope of their regulation to primarily cover the public interest items like food safety and environmental risk. This provides an opportunity for the industry to achieve harmonisation through a code of practice.

FIFA is represented on the Fertilizer Working Group which is convened by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry and includes

representatives of the States, CSIRO, and Food Standards Australia New Zealand. This group helps to ensure that environment and food safety standards for fertilizers are consistent across jurisdictions. The group has discussed the concept of a code of practice or an Australian Standard for fertilizer description and labelling which could be referred to or called up in the State regulations.

FIFA members have now developed a draft code of practice suitable for widespread distribution with the aim of receiving input from all interested parties. The code of practice has the following scope:

1. The practical and physical requirements for labels for bulk and bagged product, including method of delivery to the end user.
2. Description of the nutrient content of fertilizer products including:
  - 2.1. The minimum level of inclusion at which a nutrient can be included.
  - 2.2. The forms that must be stated for each nutrient.
  - 2.3. The acceptable variation from stated analysis
  - 2.4. The convention for the use of numbers in names.
3. Details of the concentration of certain impurities above threshold levels, including
  - 3.1. Lead
  - 3.2. Cadmium
  - 3.3. Mercury
  - 3.4. Fluorine
  - 3.5. Biuret
4. Warning statements appropriate to the impurities detailed in 2.
5. Warning statements appropriate to other products including selenium and molybdenum.
6. Physical descriptions.
7. Warning statements for dust and other OH&S hazards.
8. Maximum pack size for end user sale of 25kg, with a phase in period of three years.

The draft code of practice is now available from the [FIFA web site](#) and all interested parties are encouraged to provide comment by 28 March 2008.

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## Fertilizer Contaminants Study Data Collection



Food safety is an issue that gets peoples attention and a series of media stories in 2002 led to FIFA becoming a member of the Australian Government's Fertilizer Working Group.

The group which includes representatives of State governments and Food Standards Australia New Zealand is managing a project to evaluate the risks posed by contaminants in fertilizer products.

The project is in three phases, the first of which was a scoping study completed by CSIRO in April 2005. The phase one study report can be downloaded at <http://www.clw.csiro.au/cecr/publications.html>

The second phase of the study is now underway with FIFA members providing the CSIRO project team with available data on the range of possible contaminants identified in phase one. Australian companies will also be contacting their overseas suppliers to obtain any available analyses for the contaminants being investigated.

The project is likely to result in some substances being banned from fertilizers and new maximum permissible concentrations for others. In the long term, these measures will protect consumers from potential harm and ensure that we can continue to safely use the fertilizers that feed the world.

## AFSA National Conference

The 2008 AFSA National Conference will be held in Perth from 6 to 8 August, at the Vines Resort in the Swan Valley. All members of the fertilizer industry – and those with an interest in the industry, are strongly encouraged to attend. Details on the program and other activities are being developed and will be available from the AFSA website ([www.afsa.net.au](http://www.afsa.net.au)) in due course. Proposed regulation of fertilizers in Western Australia will be a feature.



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## Climate Change – Carbon Trading - Fertilizer



MEMBER

*FIFA is a facilitative member of the Greenhouse Challenge Plus Program*

As part of its obligations to the Greenhouse Challenge Plus program, FIFA will continue to provide up-to-date information to FIFA members about the greenhouse effect, and some of the national and international responses – including ways to minimize the industry's greenhouse gas 'footprint'.

At its December 2007 meeting, the FIFA Board heard about progress on the proposed National carbon trading scheme, from Tas Sakellaris – Assistant Secretary of the Climate Change Group (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet). While there was some uncertainty around the new government's intentions, some of the key points made were:

- The Federal Government will be cautious on implementing actions associated with Climate Change, including Carbon Trading, until the Garnaut Report is completed – some time in mid 2008
- It has reduced the timetable for a trading scheme from the previous 2012 to 2010, and this will require the design details by the end of 2008
- It is likely that Government will give further direction in late January/early February of this year.

Based on announcements made prior to the 2007 Federal Election, it was clear that the scheme would include a "no disadvantage" principle for those companies that continue to undertake abatement during the development phase of the scheme. That is, they would not be disadvantaged in receiving carbon credits. The Government is keen to ensure companies don't defer action during the three-year implementation period.

As previously advised, agriculture will not be fully included in the initial design of any trading scheme, due largely to the lack of required data. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities to participate in the provision of carbon 'offsets'. While there is no clear timetable for agriculture's participation in the scheme:

- There is a concerted R&D program to explore meaningful techniques and abatement opportunities for this sector. There are more than 100 methodologies regarding measurement being assessed.
- NZ is introducing a phased scheme starting with forestry in 2008 through to stationary energy in 2010 and agriculture in 2013. There is a high level joint working group with NZ.

For the fertilizer industry, nitrous oxide emissions, the potential for farmers to sell carbon credits and the effects of climate change on agricultural production are all likely to have large impacts on future activity. Combined with the impacts of carbon accounting on energy use, climate change is now definitely a big issue on the industry agenda.

Tas was very appreciative of the opportunity to meet with some of the key players in the fertilizer industry, and explained the Government's commitment to continue the dialogue. FIFA will continue to build relationships with key agencies involved in climate change.

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## Industry Environmental Awards

Significant achievements in the environmental performance of the fertilizer industry were recognized at the August 2007 industry conference on Hamilton Island (QLD). The FIFA Environment Awards are available in four categories and acknowledge the efforts of companies, and individuals. The Director General of the International Fertiliser Industry Association, Luc Maene and the CEO of Incitec Pivot Limited, Julian Segal presented the awards during the conference dinner.



The *Platypus* award is available to FIFA 'Ordinary' members with an annual turnover of more than \$150 million – and was presented to Peter Davy (*left, Luc Maene at right*) for Hi Fert Pty Ltd. Hi Fert's award was in recognition of its redevelopment work at its Townsville depot. When Hi Fert took over the site from its previous owners, they soon found the storage capacity and site layout to be inadequate for an efficient and environmentally safe operation. HiFert made significant modifications, including new covered storage and earth bunding. These works allowed better water quality protection, as well as a reduction in the number of road transfers between its Townsville and Mackay depots.



The *Eucalyptus* Award is for FIFA Ordinary members with an annual turnover of less than \$150 million and was presented to Peter McEwen (*left, Luc Maene centre and Julian Segal right*) for Summit Rural (WA). Summit receives the award in recognition of its groundwater quality protection works in Western Australia. In accordance with an Environmental Improvement Plan, Summit has installed a number of measures, including new roofing to cover hardstand areas, clay-lined storm-water ponds and the laying of asphalt to assist the containment of contaminated water.



The *Kookaburra* Award is for FIFA Associate Members and Australian Fertiliser Services Association Ordinary members and was presented to Rod Abbott (*left*) from Korumburra Lime and Spreading (KLS). KLS' award recognized the considerable water conservation works established at its depot in East Gippsland (Victoria). KLS' rainwater reuse system allows regular cleaning of their spreading trucks – which is a critical component of farm bio-security – using very little town water. In fact, KLS' average daily consumption of town water has reduced by 87%.

The *Snapper* Award is available to staff from FIFA and AFSA members who have made a strong individual commitment to improved environment performance. In 2007, the award was won by Cameron Schuster from CSBP Limited. Cameron received the award for his extensive work on environmental management – for both CSBP and the wider industry over a number of years. Cameron was not at the conference to receive the award directly.

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