

The Fertilizer

News and information from the Fertilizer Industry Federation of Australia



Fertilizer Industry Conference August 2010

The joint FIFA/AFSA industry conference will be held during 23-26 August 2010, on the Queensland Gold Coast. Like previous conferences, the 2010 program will cover the key issues facing the industry, from both policy and technical perspectives. A range of sponsorship options are available and members are encouraged to support the industry, and take the opportunity to publicize their company to around 300 industry partners and stakeholders. [More...](#)

Fertcare Progress

The number of people completing Fertcare training has been growing steadily since the roll-out of Fertcare in 2005, and many companies have met or are near 100% adoption rates. Some FIFA members have integrated Fertcare training into their company's learning management systems and others have been actively promoting their Fertcare status to clients and stakeholders. Towards meeting the industry's target of 100% of eligible staff trained by the end of 2010, the rate of training in the next 12 months is expected to be frantic for some members. [More...](#)

Fertcare Accredited Advisors

Four FIFA companies and one individual advisor have been successful in achieving *Fertcare Accredited Advisor* status during 2009. The nutrition recommendation systems used by CSBP, Impact, Incitec Pivot and the Back Paddock Company have met the standards for the program, paving the way for the appearance of hundreds of Fertcare Accredited Advisors. [More...](#)

The International Plant Nutrition Institute sets up in Australia

The International Plant Nutrition Institute is developing a program of agronomic research and education in Australia following the appointment of a local Regional Director, Dr Robert Norton. Through the establishment of partnerships with private and government research scientists, industry groups and member companies, the IPNI program will identify plant nutrition information needs for Australia and New Zealand, undertake the necessary research to meet those needs and communicate the results. [More...](#)

Implementation of the New Fertilizer Regulations near the Great Barrier Reef

Following the passing of a Bill to place tighter controls on the use of fertilizers in priority catchments of the Great Barrier Reef, FIFA has been actively engaged in developing the processes for implementation. As a result of a close and fruitful working relationship with the Queensland Government, Fertcare Accredited Advisors will play a critical role in assisting farmers to meet their new obligations. [More...](#)

Labelling Code of Practice

After many years of slow progress a national code of practice for description and labelling of fertilizers may now be in sight. [More...](#)

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Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference - August 2010



The triennial Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference will be held from 23 to 26 August 2010, on the beautiful Queensland Gold Coast.

The conference will include presentations and discussions on some of the key issues facing the industry including environment protection, food safety, and product security. Technical issues associated with agronomy and precision agriculture will also be covered by some of country's leading scientists.

The Australian Fertilizer Industry Conference is convened by the Fertilizer Industry Federation of Australia and the Australian Fertiliser Services Association. It is held every 3 years and attracts around 300 delegates from Australian and overseas.

All of the major manufacturers, importers, distributors and contract applicators of fertilizers will be represented at the conference, along with a number of overseas suppliers and shipping companies. Officers from various State and Commonwealth government agencies will also be there, including from the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service, the Australian Government Attorney General's Department and the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management. The conference provides an excellent opportunity to get 'close and personal' with some of the people that influence your business.

The conference provides a range of sponsorship options and you are strongly encouraged to support the industry through this means. In addition to the principal *Conference Sponsor* option, there are sponsorship opportunities for events, sessions and dinners. There are also a number of corporate display booths available. More information is available on the [FIFA web site](#), but get in quick, as the initial call for expressions of interest for sponsorship has already been made.

The stimulating and topical conference presentations will be complemented by a suite of opportunities to socialize and build business relationships. The conference dinner is always a highlight, and will include the presentation of a number of industry awards, including the prestigious industry environment awards. The social program will also include the choice of an industry golf tournament, a cruise around the Gold Coast or a rainforest ramble.

Anyone with an interest in the Australian Fertilizer Industry will benefit from attending the conference. The preliminary program is now available at the [FIFA web site](#)

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Fertcare Progress



FERTCARE®

Adoption Rates

Most members of FIFA and AFSA have committed their staff to the appropriate level of Fertcare training. Many companies have met, or are well over meeting, the industry's interim target of 70% of 'eligible' staff trained by the end of 2009. Unfortunately, some companies have not been able to meet this target and as a result, the overall industry adoption rate is around 60%. Furthermore, the number of Accu-Spread accredited machines is disappointingly low at less than 50%. Nevertheless, more than 2,000 people have been Fertcare trained and members have undertaken a number of actions towards improving the awareness and adoption of Fertcare during the year.

Promotional Activities

Nearly 30 companies are *Fertcare Accredited Organisations* and many of these have been promoting their commitment to best practice fertilizer supply, advice and use. Fertcare logos are increasingly being seen on company buildings, clothing, customer communications and advertising material. Many members are also encouraging their supply chain partners to undertake Fertcare training. For example, one company has made Fertcare training a requirement of maintaining access to its decision support system for nutrient recommendations. Another member has displayed the names of local contractors who operate Accu-Spread accredited machines on their storage sheds. This company also supplies Accu-Spread accredited contractors with jackets displaying the Accu-Spread logo, and arranges Fertcare training workshops for local operators.

Eligible Staff

Not everyone involved in the fertilizer industry is expected to undertake Fertcare training and the industry has agreed the following definition for the people who are 'eligible' for training:

Eligible staff are those employed or contracted 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 the 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.

Casual and seasonal staff are not considered 'eligible', but are expected to:

- receive the Fertcare induction material;
- avoid providing fertilizer use advice; and
- work under the supervision of a Fertcare trained person.

The decision as to who should be trained is the responsibility of each company, and this has led to some variation in the determination of 'eligibility'. Towards ensuring consistency in interpretation, the FIFA Environment Manager, Martin Shafron will meet with key FIFA members early in 2010. If you have any questions about your obligations, contact Martin on 02 6230 6987 or martin.shafron@fifa.asn.au

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Fertcare Accredited Advisors



The Fertcare Accredited Advisor (FAA) program has been established to provide stakeholders with confidence that nutrient recommendations are being made based on best practice analysis and interpretation.

To become a FAA, plant nutrition advisors must firstly complete Fertcare Level C training and secondly, be assessed for their competency in making recommendations based on soil and plant testing. To maintain FAA status, the advisor must undergo a biennial audit of the recommendations they've made in the preceding 2 years.

FERTCARE®

Plant nutrition advisors can become FAA either as individuals or as users of a FAA approved nutrient advice system

Standards and improvement

In the assessment of individuals and systems, the independent assessors use a set of standards that have been developed under the guidance of the Australasian Soil and Plant Analysis Council (ASPAC), which cover:

- Sampling methodology
- Laboratory performance (selection of appropriate laboratories)
- Interpretive data
- Recommendation development and completeness; and
- Monitoring.

If an applicant does not meet the standards in any area the assessor will provide advice on how to improve and will then reassess. The object of the program is to help you reach the competency standard required.

Licence and logos

Once an individual or a nutrient recommendation system has been assessed as meeting the requirements of the Fertcare Accredited Advisor program, they are entitled to use the Fertcare Advisor logo – as long as the individual or business has a current license agreement. The licence agreement sets out how the various Fertcare logos can be used and the Fertcare Style Guide gives details about correct colours and usage.

First batch of Fertcare Accredited Advisors

During 2009, four FIFA companies attained Fertcare Accredited Advisor status for their nutrient recommendation systems – CSBP, Impact Fertilizers, Incitec Pivot Limited and the Back Paddock Company. The users of those systems that have also successfully completed Fertcare Level C can now promote themselves as Fertcare Accredited Advisors.

More information, including the style guide, can be found at the Fertcare web site www.fertcare.com.au

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The International Plant Nutrition Institute Opens an Australian Office



The International Plant Nutrition Institute has established a local program of agronomic research and education, through its first regional program in Australia and New Zealand.

IPNI is a not-for-profit organization established in 2007 – superseding the Potash & Phosphate Institute (PPI) which had roots going back to 1935. The Institute has programs in Brazil, China, India, Latin America, USA, Canada, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Australia & New Zealand and the Middle East. Its aim is to help maintain the productivity and prosperity of agricultural industries by maintaining soil health. A key part of that is to ensure that the nutrients lost in produce exported beyond the farm gate are replaced using scientifically proven fertilizer strategies.

The new Australian Regional Director, Dr Rob Norton, will liaise with private and government research scientists, industry groups, and member companies to identify plant nutrition information needs and nutrient management improvement opportunities.

“My role will be to support training and research programs with technical input from my own research, as well as through links to IPNI programs in other countries,” Rob said. Rob has over 20 years of experience in agronomic research in the grains industry, including fertilizer management, oilseeds, new crops and climate change.

IPNI is a global organization with initiatives addressing the world’s growing need for food, fuel, fibre, and feed. There is widespread concern for issues such as climate change and the relationship between crop production and the environment, and IPNI programs are achieving positive results. Best management practices (BMP’s) for fertilizer use employ the concepts of applying the right product, at the right rate, right time, and right place. A philosophy firmly entrenched in the Fertcare program.

Membership of IPNI is composed of companies that are producers of one or more of the major plant nutrients (N, P, K and S) for agricultural purposes, and there are several member companies in Australia and New Zealand. IPNI publishes “Better Crops with Plant Food” magazine and hosts international and regional websites. To subscribe to Better Crops, either contact Rob Norton (rnorton@ipni.net) or go to the IPNI website (<http://www.ipni.net>) to register on-line. The website also has many publications about fertilizer best management practices across the globe and these are free to download (<http://anz.ipni.net>).

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Implementation of the New Fertilizer Regulations near the Great Barrier Reef



On 4 June 2009, the Queensland Government passed a Bill to place tighter controls on the use of fertilizer and pesticide use in 3 priority catchments of the Great Barrier Reef. The Bill implements amendments to the Queensland Environment Protection Act and covers:

- Commercial sugar cane farming; and
- Cattle grazing on properties >2000ha; in
- The catchments of the Wet Tropics, Mackay-Whitsunday and Burdekin Dry Tropics.

The main implications for fertilizers are in the sugar cane industry where growers are required to soil test plant year cane blocks, calculate the optimum rate of nitrogen and phosphorus and then not exceed that rate of application. Growers must also keep records of their soil test results, the calculations made and details of the purchase and application of fertilizer.

Working closely with the Queensland Government, FIFA has been able to ensure that the methods for soil sampling, analysis and interpretation are consistent with good industry practice and the Fertcare Accredited Advisor program. Whilst the onus is on the grower to comply with the regulation, the guidance documents state that an alternative to calculating the optimum rate yourself is to use a professional advisor. It then defines a professional advisor as one that meets the three national competency standards that are covered by the Fertcare Accredited Advisor assessment (including Fertcare Level C training).

Laboratories must meet Australian Standard ISO/IEC 17025-2005, which is covered by NATA accreditation, and must participate in the ASPAC proficiency program. These are the same standards required to meet the laboratory requirements for the Fertcare Accredited Advisor program.

In summary, the new regulations mean that cane growers must use approved soil testing, laboratory analysis and interpretation methods. If they are going to rely on third-party advice, it should be from a professional advisor. The guidance documents specifically list Fertcare Accredited Advisors as meeting these standards.

Whilst the regulation applies to growers and not to fertilizer suppliers or advisors, it gives growers a clear choice of using a Fertcare Accredited Advisor rather than doing their own calculations. The assessment and audit processes for Fertcare Accredited Advisors gives the Queensland Government confidence that advisors will be consistently providing advice that meets the guidelines of the regulation.

The regulations come into effect on January 1, 2010 and details of the regulation, guidance materials and tools are at www.reefwise farming.qld.gov.au

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Labelling Code of Practice



The first recommendation of the recent Senate Inquiry into the Australian Fertilizer Industry is that "...the states and territories should consider, as a matter of priority, adopting uniform description and labelling of fertiliser products to ensure consistency between jurisdictions."

This is an issue that FIFA has been working on for many years and the recommendation may help us to finally get the agreement of all states and territories to adopt a single code of practice for the description and labelling of fertilizers.

In the last few years we have been able to achieve uniformity on maximum permissible concentrations for heavy metals across jurisdictions, but the use and wording of warning statements has remained a point of difference between the states. Through the Fertilizer Working Group (FWG), which is convened by the Australian Government and includes all the States and Territories as well as FIFA, the various jurisdictions have agreed in principle that a code of practice, managed by the FWG will be agreed and adopted.

The draft code of practice, developed by FIFA, is available on our web site and interested parties are encouraged to provide any comment by the end of January 2010, in anticipation of a final round of negotiations and agreement early in the New Year.

In a separate but related development, CSIRO has completed a report into possible contaminants in mineral fertilizers and industrial wastes applied to agricultural land. The report identifies a number of areas of potential concern and confirms that cadmium, lead, mercury and fluorine continue to require careful management. The report also provides a set of trigger values for a long list of potential contaminants. These values indicate where further investigation is required, and will guide future research work and assessment processes for the application of industrial waste to land.

Once the Government's response to the report has been finalised, the report will be made available on the [CSIRO web site](#). FIFA will be closely involved in developing and managing any further investigations or actions arising from the report.

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