

Agriculture Trends towards Responsible Nutrient Management

With the current administration and distress in the global economy, there appears to be a convergence of political, economic, and environmental concerns demanding a clear definition of “Green” as it pertains to agriculture. Environmental bias has become more prevalent; and broader acceptance that the connotations of being “Green” are desirable can be expected. Traditional, production oriented industries now yearn to position themselves as “Green (*as is prudent*)” and a practical definition of what “Green” means in an agricultural context is needed. Responsible Nutrient Management® emerges as the equilibrium between environmental concern and production and may agriculturally define “green”.

It is important for agriculture as an industry to keep from becoming polarized towards, or fractured into one of two paradigms; environmental extremism or laissez-faire resource exploitation. Neither represents sound judgment or a practical avenue to sustainably feed the world. Farmers are hesitant to be described as “Green”, yet traditionally the majorities of farmers epitomize the meaning of “stewardship” and understand well the importance of protecting our precious resources. While a few vocal activists in our society have been reluctant to accept that Agriculture is not the sole villain responsible for all environmental ills, global warming, polluted rivers, lost wildlife habitat, and some forms of cancer; they too are dependent upon the food and fiber produced by the farmers of the world. Both sides need something to understand and accept from each of their perspectives.

Responsible Nutrient Management® does not involve mandating standards of production that are economically damaging or restrict productivity. Instead, Responsible Nutrient Management® advocates using the most efficient cultural practices and usable plant nutrition products available. When the highest percentage of applied nutrients ends up producing a crop yield, the least environmental risk is created. Nutrients that are taken up to produce food and fiber do not end up in streams and lakes. Though precision placement of highly efficient fertilizer products is essential to Responsible Nutrient Management®, responsible nutrient managers employ more than just efficient fertilizer products. They soil test regularly to ensure that they do not over-apply costly inputs and high salt fertilizers. They optimally time the application of balanced nutrient programs and understand the value of micronutrients and nutrient interactions. These managers incorporate conservation tillage when possible and supplement applied fertilizers by utilizing cover crops and crop rotation to sequester nutrients from the environment and increase organic matter. Responsible nutrient managers often combine applications to save fuel and conserve soil structure and these managers apply inputs based upon optimal return on investment and not always highest yield potential.

In short, **Responsible Nutrient Management® is the process by which a producer achieves the best Return On Investment for his crop production while employing environmental stewardship and conservation of resources.**

Most farmers employ some components of Responsible Nutrient Management® into their operations already, and as the world food economy continues to grow more of these practices will need to be incorporated to maintain a sustainable farming operation. Environmental concerns require education regarding the practices employed to sustainably provide the world’s food supply and a constructive dialogue would go far to create common ground and mutual appreciation. Perhaps Responsible Nutrient Management® is a theme on which both can agree.

Agro-Culture Liquid Fertilizers is helping, through education and alliances, to create awareness that Responsible Nutrient Management® is the best option for the future ability of sustainable agriculture to meet the food and fiber needs of a growing world population. Agro-Culture Liquid Fertilizers entire line of **“HIGH-PERFORMANCE”™** plant nutrition products are all engineered to be integral components of Responsible Nutrient Management®. Together with No-Till Farmer Magazine, Agro-Culture Liquid Fertilizers has launched a national campaign that will annually acknowledge three growers from across the country as Responsible Nutrient Management® Practitioners. The criterion for this recognition has been drafted and is adjudicated by an impartial panel of agricultural professionals and academics. For more information visit: www.responsiblenutrients.com .

Responsible Nutrient Management®

- Built on 4 pillars- Economics, Efficiency, Education, and Environment
- Not represented by any one company or service
- Bridges the gap between environmentalism and production agriculture
- Provides a venue of discussion between our culture and the agricultural industry
- Provide a forum for industry discussion
- Provide compatible resources for growers- combining information, ideology, products, cultural practices, and sustainable economics
- Allows a format for cooperative efforts between sincere companies and organizations to bring balance and relevance to the “Green” discussion without competitive cumbrance or environmental bias.
- Provide a pool of innovative talent and resources to address the issues facing agriculture in the next decade and beyond.
- Encompasses tillage, fertility, water management, fuel efficiency, sustainable productivity, marketing, crop protection
- Includes representation from all the major agricultural sectors
- Not a marketing gimmick but an educational initiative
- Introduce producers to innovative products that are well tested and effective
- To recognize growers who are practicing ‘Responsible Nutrient Management’ in their operations
- To promote the precepts of ‘Responsible Nutrient Management’ throughout the world. And to be influential enough to be heard.
- To educate about the realities of sustainable high production agriculture
- To encourage the next generation to actively participate in agriculture



Responsible Nutrient Management® Practitioner **An annual recognition selecting three recipients nationally**

Criteria for Determining Recipients

- Recipients must incorporate no-till or a combination of no-till and other conservation-tillage practices into their operation
- Recipients must employ regular soil testing
- Recipients must demonstrate conscious effort to reduce the over-application of high salt commodity fertilizers
- Recipients must employ a balanced fertility program that includes micronutrients when recommended
- Recipients must include precision placement of highly efficient fertilizers in their overall fertility program
- Weight will be given to recipients who supplement applied fertilizers through the use of cover crops, when appropriate, that sequester nutrients for subsequent crops and organic matter buildup
- Recipients must engage in practices that promote building of organic matter.
- Recipients must effectively manage water flow through their fields by appropriate tiling or other management practices
- Recipients must farm at least 250 acres of production crops and forages.
- Recipients must practice appropriate crop rotation
- Recipients must minimize trips across field to save soil structure and fuel
- Recipient must advocate these practices within the ag community
- Recipient must typically surpass the county yield averages for the crops they produce

The inaugural class of 2009 includes David Brandt from Carroll, Ohio; Dan and Ed Wilkinson of Gettysburg, Pa; and Mike Starkey from Brownsburg, Ind. Visit : www.responsiblenutrients.com to nominate a Responsible Nutrient Management® Practitioner from your area.

