



# Fertiliser Matters

New Zealand Fertiliser Manufacturers' Research Association Newsletter

## Code of Practice for Nutrient Management

Ultimate aim is adoption of Nutrient Management Plans by all farmers

*The goal of the fertiliser industry is for every farmer in New Zealand to operate a full farm Nutrient Management Plan (NMP). The Chairman of Fert Research, David Graham, said the Association would be pursuing this goal in his address at the launch of the Association's Code of Practice for Nutrient Management. The Code was officially launched by Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Jim Anderton, in Wellington on March 27.*

**T**he Code is a freely available wide-application tool to assist in developing a Nutrient Management Plan, by providing best nutrient management options and encouraging land managers and their advisors to record nutrient management information in a template.

At the launch, Mr Graham said the fertiliser industry was committed to providing leadership in the area of sustainable farming to the 42,000 farmers that are members of the co-operatives that make up the Association.

Already 80% of dairy farmers are operating nutrient budgets (a prerequisite for the nutrient management planning process), with Fert Research confirming there will be 100% dairy farmer adoption by mid 2007, with other farming and growing sectors to follow.

Mr Graham called on the country to "believe in the ability of farmers to make the right decision about the way they manage their farms."

He said contrary to what many believed, the average farmer is deeply committed to sustainability and environmental protection.

"After all, to the farmer the land is their home, their business and their major investment and common sense alone dictates that you would do all within your power to nurture something that valuable," he said.

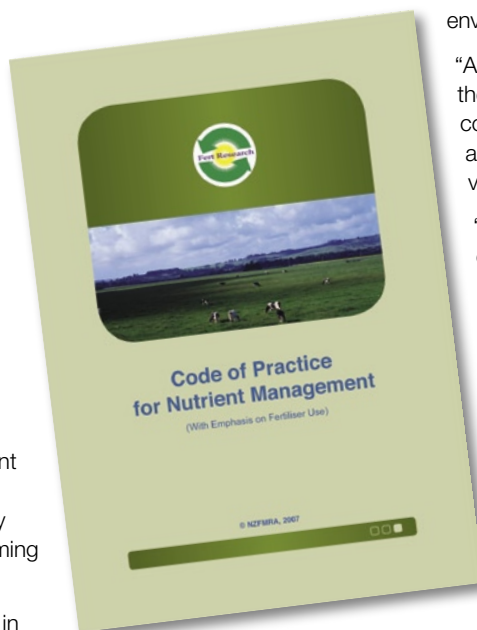
"The judicious use of nutrients is critical to the economic future of New Zealand.

"Without fertiliser use we could not sustain the food production output that drives New Zealand's economy.

"We must also nurture and protect the health of our soils and water. If we don't, we cannot sustain future food production."

He said the key was getting the balance right between nutrient use and maintaining the health of soil and water.

"Fert Research is committed to working with central and regional government to find answers to common challenges," said Mr Graham.





## editorial

by Dr Hilton Furness  
Technical Director

# Fertiliser industry providing answers to climate change

*A fundamental question the Government has to answer as it grapples with managing climate change and sustainable land management, is whether it adopts the carrot or the stick approach to agriculture.*

**T**he Minister of Agriculture, Jim Anderton, spelt it out clearly in an address he gave at the launch of our *Code of Practice for Nutrient Management* in Wellington last month.

The Minister talked in terms of agricultural industries having to “give something” along with everyone else, of “dealing” with free riders who let the side down and “contributing” to solving the challenges.

Those comments were frank, and the sentiment not unreasonable.

Providing answers was a challenge the fertiliser industry took to heart more than a decade ago, and as a consequence, in addition to getting our own house in order, we are ready and able to play a partnership role with central and regional government in assisting farmers to meet their resource management and sustainable land management obligations in a flexible and efficient way.

For example, as part of developing our submission to the *Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change Options* paper, Fert Research, which through its members represents some 42,000 farmers, considered various options very closely. As a result we came to the conclusion that a tradeable option for agricultural emissions provides the most freedom and flexibility to farmers, while still achieving climate change targets.

Therefore, our paper strongly supported the early introduction of trading options and the industry offered to become the ‘point of obligation’ and undertake ‘estimates

for emissions’ at the farm level. In this way, we believe the Association can play a meaningful and significant role.

It will come as no surprise that in our submission we strongly opposed the introduction of a charge on nitrogen fertiliser. Frankly, we see such a charge as being a blunt and inappropriate instrument, more targeted at revenue generation than at encouraging behaviour change. Tracking nitrogen fertiliser usage against price fluctuations over past years supports the argument that a charge on nitrogen fertiliser is highly unlikely to influence use.

What will come as a surprise to many however, is the Association’s view that the use of any incentive or offset scheme introduced to “accelerate” the uptake of nitrification inhibitor use, should be short term. Ultimately, inhibitors should be incorporated into a carbon trading scheme where farmers would obtain carbon credits achieved through inhibitor use.

Many still have doubt as to whether farmers will respond without regulatory intervention to sustainable farming practices and are of the view that regulations are the only answer.

Yet the evidence demonstrates farmers will respond. In June 2006 one in three dairy farmers (33%) operated a nutrient budget. Nine months later, in March 2007, four out of five (80%) were operating nutrient budgets with the dairy industry on target to achieve 100% sign-up by June 2007.

This has been made possible by close co-operation between the dairy and fertiliser industries.

We are now ready and committed to maintain the momentum we have developed through a variety of initiatives. Through undertaking nutrient budgets the industry has demonstrated it has the knowledge, tools and farmer buy-in which will enable us to deliver farm nutrient management plans (as described on page 1).

Given the extensive initiatives undertaken by the industry, such as Code, advisor training and Overseer, the fertiliser industry is of the view that it is meeting the Minister’s call to stand up and be accountable.

We would anticipate recognition of that, and other similar initiatives, in the Government’s overall approach to the Climate Change issue.

# New Zealand nutrient management training goes from strength to strength

*The Massey and Fert Research co-developed intermediate-level short course in Sustainable Nutrient Management celebrates its 5th anniversary this year, with the advanced course added two years ago.*

420 people have attained the Intermediate Certificate standard since the course was introduced and a further 65 have continued and achieved the Advanced level. This year around 100 participants will go through the Intermediate course and 40 will complete the Advanced level.

This represents a significant number of fertiliser advisors; from the member companies of Fert Research (for whom the intermediate course is compulsory), to private consultants plus regional council staff, crown research institute researchers and farmer/grower organisation representatives.

The courses ensure farmers and growers are receiving sound, scientific nutrient use advice from their member company advisors. The training takes into account production and environmental issues – both important for responsible and profitable land management. It also means advisers are trained on the latest tools and are up-to-date with the latest research. This is thanks to a well-regarded academic organisation; Massey University, through its Fertilizer and Lime Research Centre, being involved.

In 2005 Massey developed and funded an 'Orchard and Arable' upgrade to cover horticultural and cropping system case studies, in addition to the already established 'Pastoral' option.

Course co-ordinator, Professor Mike Hedley, says the courses are in high demand. "In the current environment, with sustainable nutrient use top of many people's agenda, the courses are more relevant than ever before. Continual updates and addition of information, including the new Code of Practice for Nutrient Management, keeps the course content topical and means refreshers can also be taken by previous graduates," says Professor Hedley.

A computer-based introductory course has recently been added by Massey, with assistance and funding from Dairy InSight. The course is for people who want a general background on nutrient management or for those who want to upskill before entering the short course.

For more about all the courses contact Lance Currie, course administrator at [l.d.currie@massey.ac.nz](mailto:l.d.currie@massey.ac.nz) or visit <http://flrc.massey.ac.nz>

## Offer open to attend Sustainable Nutrient Management Course

If you are a practicing on-farm consultant to the dairy industry, Dexcel is offering you the chance to obtain recognised industry accreditation through the Massey University- and Fert Research-developed Short Course; 'Sustainable Nutrient Management in New Zealand Agriculture' at half price. The three day course will provide participants with a working knowledge of assessing nutrient requirements for a range of agricultural systems. It also covers best practices for environmental protection and compliance with the *Code of Practice for Nutrient Management*, and the use of the decision support software, Overseer.

Course still open for applicants:  
**Canterbury: 6–8 June**  
**(registrations close early May)**

The subsidy reduces the cost of the course from \$1000 to \$500 (ex. GST). Some conditions apply. For further details on eligibility for the course and how to register, contact Kim Sharp, Dexcel Events Coordinator on: 06 278 6500, 0274808405, or email [kim.sharpe@dexcel.co.nz](mailto:kim.sharpe@dexcel.co.nz)



## Introducing [www.fertresearch.org.nz](http://www.fertresearch.org.nz)

Fert Research's new website was launched at the same time as the new Code. Updated to be even easier to navigate and now hosting the entire Code in a searchable online format, the site holds all Fert Research-related information. With the Code online it's also interactive, and the Nutrient Management Planning template (Appendix 4 of the Code) is included as a PDF that land managers, and advisors can fill in on the computer, or print and fill in by hand. If you'd like a hard copy of the Code, it's easy to download the PDF and print it out. The full Code PDF can also be saved onto your computer and referred to at any time, without you having to be online. We invite your feedback on the Code, and on the website. Please feel free to email us through the website enquiry form, or direct to [info@fertresearch.org.nz](mailto:info@fertresearch.org.nz)

# Fert Research contributes to global Best Management Practices

*In March this year Dr Hilton Furness attended a workshop in Brussels hosted by the International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA). At the gathering of some 30 like-organisations and 40 delegates, Dr Furness was a presenter, and chaired a panel session on national and regional voluntary initiatives.*

**H**e is also part of an IFA-formed working group charged to develop Fertiliser Best Management Practices (FBMPs) for use globally.

Reporting back, his assessment was that New Zealand emerged as one of the leading countries ahead of the Europeans and the North Americans in the development of BMP tools to assist farmers to use fertilisers in a sustainable way.

Among the main recommendations of the workshop are the definition by IFA of:

- A global framework for FBMPs, within which site-specific practices would be developed by the local industry and its partners;
- A set of indicators for measuring the performance of FBMPs.

IFA reports that Fert Research's experiences will help shape these outcomes.

## Livestock's shadow not so long in New Zealand

*A recently released United Nations report (a LEAD – Livestock, Environment and Development – initiative) looking at the impact of livestock on the environment, has rated New Zealand well.*

The 2006 report, entitled 'Livestock's long shadow – environmental issues and options', assesses the impact of livestock on the environment. It summarises that the level of its impact is so significant globally that making major reductions in impact is urgent yet able to be "achieved at reasonable cost."

The report states

- New Zealand has "one of the most efficient and environmentally benign ruminant livestock industries"
- "New Zealand made sweeping subsidy reforms in the 1980s, and now reports that the removal of subsidies resulted in significant reduction of environmental damage caused by agriculture in general..."
- The report also includes mention of New Zealand's uptake of nitrogen inhibitors as a positive step.

View the full document on the LEAD website: [www.virtualcentre.org](http://www.virtualcentre.org)

## Research funding review underway

The Fert Research board is reviewing the way the Association currently funds research. With an aim to be part of pan sector research groupings, Fert Research hopes to fund nutrient-related projects that make a difference, and contribute to significant outcomes for the agricultural industry as a whole.

By the end of June this year the new funding process will be finalised and communicated to all interested parties.

If you have any questions about this review please contact the Fert Research office at [info@fertresearch.org.nz](mailto:info@fertresearch.org.nz) or call 09 415 1357.



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