

2014 Grow Canada Announcement

Agriculture has a role in protecting the environment. A key component is ensuring Canada's valuable water bodies are preserved and safe. The Canadian Fertilizer Institute, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Soil Conservation Council of Canada have been working in partnership toward a common goal of protecting the quality of Canada's lakes, rivers and groundwater.

As has been widely reported, more than 400,000 northwest Ohio residents lost public water in August 2014 due to the presence of a toxin created by algae blooms in Lake Erie. Agriculture is a contributor to this issue and is working to increase efforts to protect water quality while remaining profitable.

From the North Kensington Watershed in Prince Edward Island to Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba, farmers are changing the way they make decisions on their farms. Agricultural sustainability is all about farm best management practices that keep producers profitable while protecting the environment. Canadian agriculture must embrace the challenges and opportunities presented by this growing global demand for sustainably grown food products.

Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Soil Conservation Council of Canada and the Canadian Fertilizer Institute recognize that markets are demanding more food, fuel and fibre. This growth cannot occur at the expense of water quality. Rather, the solution has to continue to be developed through science-based modern agriculture.

Canadian Fertilizer Institute:

The Canadian Fertilizer Institute (CFI) recognizes that Canada's crop producers have a critical role in meeting the world's food demand and fertilizer is a key ingredient in making that possible. One of the cornerstones of CFI's sustainability program is 4R Nutrient Stewardship which gives farmers the ability to utilize best management practices for the efficient use of fertilizer.

4R Nutrient Stewardship is an innovative approach to improving profits, protecting the environment and meeting society's goals on Canada's crop lands. The objective of the program is simple—helping to ensure producers apply fertilizer using the right source, right rate, right time and right place system.

The 4R program is being implemented in provinces across the country. Over the past two years, CFI has developed regionally specific partnership programs with farm groups, provincial governments and environmental groups in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta and is planning to expand into Saskatchewan.

CFI was also encouraged that, earlier this year, the International Joint Commission issued a report on phosphorus in Lake Erie which endorsed 4R Nutrient Stewardship as an important opportunity to improve fertilizer use in the watershed and increase water quality.

Ducks Unlimited Canada:

Since our inception in 1938, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) has been working to conserve wetland and upland habitats important to waterfowl, wildlife and the environment. In addition to their importance as habitat, wetlands also provide many important values to the agriculture industry. Recent research conducted by DUC and our partners has helped define these values.

Stewardship models like the 4Rs are an excellent step toward ensuring that the value of agricultural inputs is maximized while reducing the risk of input losses to the environment. Despite these best management practices, unexpected weather events can result in crop inputs becoming mobile with runoff water. Wetlands provide an excellent first and last line of defense against unintended runoff of agricultural inputs. Intact wetland basins capture agricultural products and prevent them from reaching downstream rivers and lakes. Protecting and restoring wetlands on a landscape also sequesters greenhouse gases, recharges groundwater and helps protect against flooding.

DUC has been proactively working with the agricultural industry and governments to help understand and communicate the importance of protecting Canada's water quality. Keeping wetlands on the landscape is an important part of maintaining this critical natural resource. DUC is encouraged that some Canadian provinces have taken steps to protect wetlands and many others are in the process of developing similar legislation.

Soil Conservation Council of Canada:

Soil Conservation Council of Canada (SCCC) believes that the agriculture industry plays a key role in stewarding Canada's soil, air and water resources. In most instances these three resources are closely linked through common production practices. For example, modern no till farming practices provides farmers with the tools to ensure that our soils remain intact providing the basis for increasing our productivity; these same practices help provide clean water and air filtered through a healthy soil.

This past summer SCCC had the opportunity to extend our impact beyond Canada by co-hosting the 6th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture in Winnipeg with our U.S. sister organization the Conservation Technology Information Centre. This event brought industry, academia and farmers from nearly 50 countries together to share successes and challenges of conservation farming practices throughout the world.

SCCC works with partner agencies to ensure Canada's soil, air and water resources are not forgotten or sacrificed as we intensify production to meet the growing world demand for food, fuel and fibre from our existing agricultural land base.

SCCC was encouraged by the support we received from industry and governments in hosting the 6th World Congress on Conservation Agriculture. We encourage those not already engaged with SCCC to join us in ensuring that the importance of stewarding our soils is not forgotten.