



**FERTILIZER CANADA**

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## **Fertilizer industry and conservation partners collaborate to advance 4R Nutrient Stewardship in the Western Lake Erie Basin**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 8, 2019

**OTTAWA, ON** - Water quality is a vital issue in Ontario, which also holds some of the country's most viable and productive farmland. Fertilizer Canada is aware of and closely monitoring the threat of a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) in the western Lake Erie basin, expected to occur in the coming weeks and months. We continue to work with Ontario crop and conservation partners to increase adoption of 4R Nutrient Stewardship ensuring the Great Lakes remain drinkable, swimmable and fishable.

“The Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) is committed to working with our partners to reduce phosphorus in our local watercourses by encouraging the use of agricultural best management practices, like 4R Nutrient Stewardship and cover crops,” says Dr. Katie Stammer, Water Quality Scientist at ERCA. “We continue to monitor our local watercourses so that we can track our efforts towards the goal of a 40% reduction of phosphorus, and we follow the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) bulletins closely so we can have advance warning of when the algal bloom may make its way to our shores.”

It has been a particularly cold and wet spring season which has been a challenge for Ontario growers, resulting in a later than usual crop season and less time to apply nutrients prior to planting. While agriculture is only one of several sources of dissolved phosphorous, the fertilizer industry has invested significantly in helping growers in the Lake Erie watershed reduce losses by adopting the 4R Nutrient Stewardship approach to guide their fertilizer application practices.

“Building upon the adoption of conservation tillage to reduce soil erosion and nutrient loss, the 4R Nutrient Stewardship program aims to reduce these losses even further,” says Tom Bruulsema, Chief Scientist with the International Plant Nutrition Institute of Canada. “Farm-specific choices relating to placement, timing and rates of fertilizer and manure applications can reduce losses of both dissolved and particulate forms of phosphorus.”

Ontario has embraced 4R Nutrient Stewardship as a valuable tool for meeting the province's agricultural and environmental goals. 4R Nutrient Stewardship is a recognized part of the Ontario Government's strategy to reduce nutrient losses from Ontario farmland referencing 4R in the Canada-Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan and the Made-in-Ontario Environmental Plan.



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Over the last five years, efforts by industry in partnership with crop and conservation organizations have significantly increased. Programs in place now were not a part of the solution a decade ago. These efforts include substantial research, a 4R Nutrient Management Specialty Certification for Certified Crop Advisors, grower fertilizer use surveying, and a 4R Certification program for agricultural service providers all geared towards increasing adoption of nutrient stewardship on the farm. And, they are yielding results.

“As we monitor the developments in the western Lake Erie region, it is important to note Fertilizer Canada’s ongoing, diligent efforts in promoting the sustainable on-farm application of nutrients,” says Garth Whyte, President and CEO at Fertilizer Canada. “As Canada’s first adopter of the 4R Certification program, Ontario continues to demonstrate its leadership and commitment to sustainable agricultural practices.”

The 4R Certification program was developed as part of a voluntary initiative to improve such watershed conditions as the Western Lake Erie Basin and optimize crop uptake of nutrients. Launched a year ago, the 4R Certification program is increasingly being adopted by Ontario agri-retailers, with over 20 sites who have currently completed a 4R Certification pre-audit and are moving towards 4R Certification. Earlier this year, Thompsons Limited, AGRIS Co-operative Ltd, and Settingington’s Fertilizer Service Ltd were the first agri-retail facilities to become 4R Certified. As the 4R Certification Program advances, Fertilizer Canada will have the ability to validate the number of acres certified under the program.

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*Fertilizer Canada represents manufacturers, wholesale and retail distributors of nitrogen, phosphate, potash and sulphur fertilizers. The fertilizer industry plays an essential role in Canada’s economy, contributing \$23 billion annually and over 76,000 jobs. As the unified voice of the Canadian fertilizer industry, Fertilizer Canada works to promote the safe, responsible, and sustainable distribution and use of fertilizer. [fertilizercanada.ca](http://fertilizercanada.ca).*

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