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Lake Erie Water Quality Talking Points

Overall Message

Farms and agribusinesses are doing our part to improve water quality in the Western Lake Erie Basin ***by using the right fertilizer source at the right rate, the right time and in the right place.***

Talking Points

- While the potential causes of the algal bloom in the Western Lake Erie Basin are many, farmers and the fertilizer industry are doing their part to improve and protect the waters of Lake Erie by supporting education, research and outreach on innovative farm practices.
- 4R Nutrient Stewardship (use of the right fertilizer source at the right rate, the right time and in the right place) is the foundation for science-based management of all nutrients – whether from commercial or organic sources.
- Farmers in Ohio are using phosphorus with increasing efficiency. Phosphorus use has decreased over the past twenty years, while also increasing corn production at the same time.
- This year, the agriculture community launched the ***4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program*** for fertilizer retailers. The program, which includes training and education, monitoring and field implementation of 4R practices culminates with third party audits and is a sign of the industry's commitment to nutrient stewardship. Requirements and additional details regarding the program are available at www.4Rcertified.org/how.
 - ❖ 49 agricultural retailers in the Lake Erie region have signed up for the voluntary certification program.
- The ***Certified Crop Adviser Program*** was established in 1992 to provide accredited agronomic professionals to work with farmers on day-to-day nutrient management decisions. CCAs have demonstrated their commitment, education, expertise and experience to make a difference. Certification includes four major competency areas: nutrient management, soil and water management, integrated pest management and crop management. Continuing education is required for on-going certification.

- The **4R Research Fund**, which is supported by the fertilizer industry and key ag industry stakeholders, has awarded more than \$2.4 million in grants for research in support of science-based research aimed at identifying nutrient management practices that protect the environment.
 - ❖ In July, the 4R Research Fund awarded a grant to United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to work in partnership with Heidelberg University, LimnoTech, The Ohio State University, The Nature Conservancy and the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI) to evaluate nutrient management practices and their relative impact on the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB). The research will also examine the 4R Certification Program's impact on crop productivity and profitability, water quality, and perceptions of growers, nutrient service providers and residents in the WLEB.

Sources

www.4Rcertified.org