



Advocating for Ohio agribusiness by creating a sustainable business climate through collaborative policy leadership, continuous education and effective communication.

House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee

Testimony by Christopher Henney
Ohio AgriBusiness Association

January 29, 2015

Chairman Hill, Vice Chairman Burkley, Ranking Member Patterson, and distinguished members of this committee; thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

I am Chris Henney, and I serve as president and CEO for the Ohio AgriBusiness Association. OABA is a 135-year-old agribusiness trade association that represents Ohio's fertilizer industry, along with the grain, feed, seed and crop protection product industries. We are affiliated with, and supportive of, The Fertilizer Institute and the Agricultural Retailers Association at the national level, the International Plant Nutrition Institute at the international level, and we administer the Certified Crop Adviser program locally in Ohio. We also administer a brand new program called the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program, which is why I'm before you today.

OABA recognizes the 4R Nutrient Stewardship principles as the foundation for all agricultural nutrient management practices. The 4R Nutrient Stewardship program provides a framework to achieve cropping system goals, such as increased production, increased farmer profitability, enhanced environmental protection and improved sustainability. To achieve those goals, the 4R concept incorporates the:

- **Right fertilizer source** at the
- **Right rate**, at the
- **Right time** and in the
- **Right place**.

Properly managed fertilizers support cropping systems that provide economic, social and environmental benefits. On the other hand, poorly managed nutrient applications can decrease profitability and increase nutrient losses, potentially degrading soil and water resources.

This understanding of nutrient management and our strong commitment to improve the long-term quality of Lake Erie led us to partner with a diverse group of stakeholders to create the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program. The voluntary program encourages agricultural retailers and nutrient service providers to adopt proven best practices through the 4Rs. This



approach provides a science –based framework for plant nutrition management and sustained crop production, while considering individual farms' needs.

The program was created to address the following goals:

- Maximize crop uptake of nutrients and minimize nutrient loss;
- Create long-term positive impacts on water bodies associated with agricultural production areas;
- Encourage sharing of the most up-to-date information about responsible nutrient stewardship with nutrient service providers and growers;
- Help the agriculture sector adapt to new research and technology in the area of nutrient stewardship.

The program outlines 43 criteria to be implemented, staggered over a 3-year period. Each criterion is evaluated or re-evaluated each year by a private third party auditor, via an in-person or desk audit, to achieve or maintain certification.

The program, which is privately funded, was officially launched in March 2014 with a concentration on the Western Lake Erie Basin. I'm pleased to share we currently have 64 facilities committed to the program, with 56 of those facilities in Ohio (the balance are in Indiana and Michigan.) Of those 64 facilities, three have been fully certified at this time.

The Ohio AgriBusiness Association is proud of our industry's commitment to this program and to the long-term improvement of Lake Erie's water quality. We're proud of the diverse partners we have with this program. Partners like The Nature Conservancy, the Ohio Soybean Council, and other state and national NGOs, academic institutions and government entities.

We recognize that there is a need to balance voluntary changes in production practices with government regulation aimed at not only ensuring clean water, but also instilling confidence in agricultural production practices for Ohio's citizens. The 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program is one example of voluntary change that is working.

I thank you for your time Mr. Chairman and members of the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee and I'd be happy to answer any questions.