

Remarks to the Clean Environment Commission

John Steendam

April 10, 2007

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(Commission Secretary)

Good Afternoon. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to address the Clean Environment Commission. My name is John Steendam, and I am the owner/manager of Springfield Fertilizer in Dugald.

While this Commission is specifically focused on the hog sector, I am here today because I believe that the agriculture industry is a complex matrix of inputs and outputs, and some of the areas being deliberated by this commission must be viewed in context of the whole, rather than by individual parts.

I have been involved in the nutrient industry for the past twenty-five years. Over that period of time, many changes have occurred in the agriculture industry in Manitoba, and the economic balance of agricultural production between field crops and livestock has certainly changed. Even the mix of grains and oilseeds grown has seen dramatic change: New crops have been introduced, and there is now a much stronger emphasis on feed grain production, to support the growing livestock industry, than there was twenty-five years ago.

For someone like myself, in the farm service industry, there is a constant challenge to stay ahead of these changes, and to assist farmers in making the right decisions for the right reasons with the best available information.

The biggest area of growth has been in the science and technology behind crop input management, and good stewardship practices. It has been said that agriculture is 2nd only to medicine in adopting new technology, and in my experience, this would certainly be true.

For example, twenty-five years ago, farmers chose the crop they were going to grow on a given field based on the year of rotation. The farmer knew approximately how much nutrient it would take to grow that crop according to a chart – and experience - and they would purchase that amount of fertilizer and spread it out on the field as evenly as they could.

Today, crop rotation is only one of the factors used to determine what should be grown on a particular field. Generally speaking, that determination is also made by what options are available based on the results of a soil sample, economics, and a much wider variety of cropping choices.

The farmer and his dealer then determine the amount of nutrient already available in the field from the soil sample, and calculate the top-up nutrient and micro-nutrient required to grow the crop.

Once that has been assessed, the dealer then uses a computer calibrated blending system to ensure that the farmer receives exactly the right mixture. This mixture is then weighed with equipment that is checked by the Province to ensure the calibration is accurate.

From there, it is transferred to a fertilizer spreader, where it is spread across the field on a grid. The grid is created by a GPS unit in the machine

that actually steers itself across the field. Meanwhile the on board computer constantly calculates and controls the amount of product being applied, to ensure that no more nutrient than is absolutely required is put down in any one area of the field. While not everyone is using the full extent of this technology yet, it is becoming much more common.

It is interesting to note that, five years ago, GPS technology was a fairly new concept that had been adopted by a few dealers. Now most dealers incorporate it in their spraying and spreading operations. Five years has radically changed what is done, and how it is done. By contrast, a "study" commissioned for regulatory purposes is considered relatively current if it is five years old. There is often a disconnect between the length of time it takes to study a problem and make conclusions, and the change within the industry, and advances, over the same period of time.

To get back to my point, the use of new technologies and more accurate assessment and placement of nutrients reduces the potential for over-fertilization and potential contamination, and ensures that the farmer isn't wasting money on unneeded inputs. For some reason, our customers see that economic factor as being important.

Seriously, though, given the extremely tight margins in grain production over the past several years, the economic reality is that farmers cannot afford mistakes – they must be extremely vigilant in calculating the cost of their inputs. In addition, their land is their livelihood.

Farmers don't want to create an environmental liability by contamination, or by oversupplying nutrients to the land and water.

The good news is that when a mistake has been made, and there is a high nutrient load, it can be remedied by reducing the requirements with the next crop. As a supplier, a serious error in nutrient placement could mean the loss of a customer, or could damage your local reputation. This is not a risk that would be taken lightly by anyone who intends to be in business for the next twenty-five years. Our business is very much dependent on doing it right, and protecting our local reputation.

The commercial fertilizer industry has been working hard through the Crop Nutrients Council to help farmers adopt best management practices that encourages responsible crop production, disseminates information on new technologies and techniques, and provides guidance on good environmental stewardship. While this Council is only a few years old, it has made some gains, and continues to gather acceptance. (*The Canadian Association of Ag Retailers, of which I am a member, has been an active participant in this Council*). I would encourage the Clean Environment Commission to involve the Crop Nutrients Council in their deliberations to ensure that all factors are carefully considered before any sector specific recommendations are made.

With the growth in the livestock industry, manure management – and the mix between commercial fertilizer and nitrogen by-products from manure – has become a larger area of interest.

As the commercial industry continues to drive towards more sophisticated processes in determining nutrient needs, and more site-specific land

placement of those nutrients, we must be careful to ensure that the same processes are used to determine the nutrient value of manure spread on the land, and be equally careful about placement procedures. The balance between the two sources needs to be maintained to ensure that the livestock industry is able to continue to thrive, and that the grains and oilseeds industry continues to have access to the nutrient and micro-nutrient supplies they require.

The livestock sector cannot provide all the required fertilizer – for example, the hog sector can only supply approximately 6% of what is required. In addition, there may be agronomic reasons why manure cannot be substituted in place of commercial fertilizers in particular instances or for particular crops. (ie. E-coli contamination of certain fruit and vegetable crops that may not be washed carefully enough by consumers)

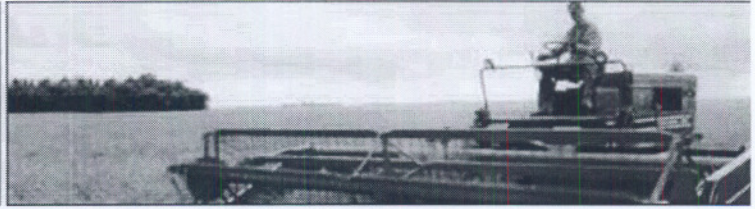
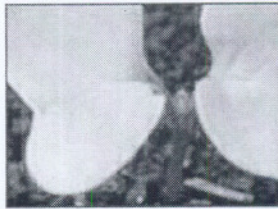
Lastly, and this is important, there is always a temptation to make broad assumptions about how problem areas got to be that way, and sometimes a desire to embrace regulation as the most expedient way to resolve it. Often, there are more creative ways to resolve issues without damaging the environment, the provincial economy, and the livelihoods of the people involved in the industry.

The point is that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. It is important that when this Commission deliberates on their final recommendations, they earnestly evaluate more than just the perceptions and concerns at this point in time. They must also look at the ramifications of any decisions on the future realities of Manitoba's environment, and the

hog industry, and also on the larger agricultural matrix. It must consider what new technology is on the horizon, and whether the needs can be met by fostering rapid adoption of better science or stewardship practices.

Any future regulations, or recommendations, need to be flexible enough to foster a vision of a healthy environment and industry in Manitoba twenty-five years from now – not just focus on the current perceptions and realities. This not only benefits the agriculture sector, but also all Manitobans. The future standard of living in Manitoba depends on agriculture's ability to continue to provide a healthy economy, and in the end, it is Manitobans who pay for the regulatory environment – both good and bad. We all have a vested interest in doing our best to work together to make prudent decisions.

Thank you for your time


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About Us

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We care about the world's ability to produce food, fuel and fibre in a sustainable way. That can't happen without crop nutrients. So the Crop Nutrients Council exists to co-ordinate the efforts of the agriculture sector in addressing issues about how to best use crop nutrients and what that means to the Earth and to people.

The Crop Nutrients Council's mission is to promote science-based beneficial management practices for crop nutrients that enhance both the economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture.

We are a national, consolidated cross-section of proactive, responsible members of the crop nutrient industry focused on the future and sustainability of all agricultural endeavors.

The Council strives to be a source of information for federal and provincial governments, as well as growers and the general public, and co-ordinates communication to these audiences about environmentally sound crop nutrient practices in the production of food.

We are also fostering communication and co-operation between all our members, and encourage research in support of science-based crop nutrient beneficial management practices.

Our thanks to the Canadian Rural Adaptation Fund and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) for the support in creating the Council. AAFC is pleased to participate in the production of this website, and is committed to working with industry partners to increase public awareness of the importance of the agri-food industry to Canada. Opinions expressed in this document are those of CNC and not necessarily the Department's.

Our Members

Made up of representatives of various agricultural sectors with a vested

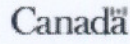
interest in its continued productivity, the CNC combines both livestock, environmental, business, and crop-focused members.

View the complete list of our members.

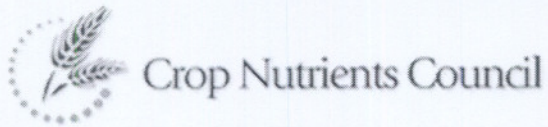


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Message from the Chair

The face of agriculture in Canada is changing. Agricultural producers can expect more government and public scrutiny of crop nutrient use.

We are seeing an increase in federal emphasis on environmental issues through the Agricultural Policy Framework and the goal of national environmental farm plans. The municipal, provincial and federal levels of government are all becoming concerned about the impact nutrients could have on the environment. This "green" government agenda is largely being driven by the public, who have taken a growing interest in farming practices across Canada.

As an industry, we recognize that these issues are going to have a significant impact on how all agricultural producers across the country manage their businesses. In the future, producers can expect to be asked to demonstrate that their farming practices meet rigorous environmental standards and satisfy local public concerns.

The Crop Nutrient Council (CNC) was founded largely in response to this growing reality of environmental policies and public interest regarding nutrient use in Canada. A key force behind the CNC's formation in May 2003 was to provide a forum where all members of the nutrients value chain could come together to discuss nutrient management policies, provide an industry voice to assist governments in policy development, and to help provide information back to primary producers.

The establishment of the CNC is a great accomplishment that would not have been possible without the vision and hard work of all participants in agriculture, including suppliers and users of organic and commercially produced nutrients. Our members include livestock producers, crop producers and fertilizer manufacturers.

Together, we have already come a long way in educating and informing agricultural producers, the public and government on the beneficial

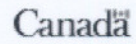
management practices taking place in the Canadian agriculture industry. I encourage you to spend some time here on our website, where you will find all of our publications and other resources, an overview of our activities, upcoming events, and more.

Chris Moran
Chair
Crop Nutrients Council



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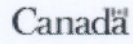
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- Agricore United
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- Agrium Inc.
- Atlantic Fertilizer Institute
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- Canadian Federation of Agriculture
- Canadian Fertilizer Institute
- Canadian Pork Council
- Canadian Seed Growers' Association
- Canola Council of Canada
- Cargill Limited
- Certified Crop Advisor – Regional Boards
- Ducks Unlimited
- George Morris Centre
- Grain Growers of Canada
- Ontario Agri-Business Association
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food
- Ontario Potato Board
- PEI Government
- Potash and Phosphate Institute of Canada
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- Quebec Fertilizer Manufacturers Association
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