

## Fert\$mart for Farm Advisors and Agronomists

### What is Fert\$mart?

Fert\$mart is the Australian dairy industry's national nutrient management framework. It was developed to improve the efficiency and profitability of fertiliser use on Australian dairy farms. Fert\$mart supports the knowhow and provides some of the tools to help dairy farmers and advisors get the best results from fertiliser. These resources are available on the Fert\$mart website: [fertsmart.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au](http://fertsmart.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au) or simply Google 'Fert\$mart'.

### Why did Fert\$mart come about?

Before Fert\$mart there were no national fertiliser management guidelines for the Australian dairy industry. There was, and still is, a clear message from the dairy industry that the guidelines are important to the industry's future. Not only are they needed to support improved fertiliser use efficiency and farm profitability, but there is also an increasing need for factories to demonstrate that they are sourcing milk from environmentally sustainable farms; Fert\$mart gives the industry a framework to provide assurance around sustainable nutrient use.

### What are the benefits for dairy farmers?

Many farmers are now finding that when they get soil and fertiliser management 'right', they can produce more feed at no extra cost. This comes with good planning and more targeted use of fertiliser. The key is to use the *Right Source* of fertiliser, at the *Right Rate*, in the *Right Place* and at the *Right Time* (the 4Rs). A Fert\$mart Plan helps the farmer to get these things right through strategic and targeted planning.

### What is a Fert\$mart Plan?

Most good agronomists already provide farmers with an annual fertiliser program for each paddock or farm management zone, outlining: the types of fertiliser to be used; the application rates; how the fertiliser is to be applied; and the timing for each application. A Fert\$mart Plan provides these recommendations plus a few more (see the reverse side for more detail provided in the Fert\$mart checklist). Agronomists who follow this approach can use the 'Fert\$mart Tick'.

### What are the benefits for farm advisors and agronomists?

The dairy industry is under increasing pressure to improve fertiliser use efficiency and advisors who can provide strategic and targeted fertiliser recommendations will always have a competitive edge. Dairy industry extension programs will continue raising farmer awareness of the benefits of the 'Fert\$mart Tick' and this will support increased enquiry from farmers. Farm advisors and agronomists are encouraged to access the free online resources and to prepare for providing Fert\$mart Plans for their clients.

### How to get started?

To get started, read the 'Fert\$mart Tick' checklist on the reverse side. There are links to the Fert\$mart website where there is more detailed information.

### What are farmers saying about Fert\$mart?

"I'm very happy with the structured program and constantly refer to the nutrient management plan" – Kyabram, VIC.

"Fert\$mart provides a whole farm fertility perspective to our decision making" – Mt Torrens, SA.

"I'm using the nutrient management plan on regular basis with the fertiliser program" – Yarroweyah, VIC.

### What are farm advisors saying about Fert\$mart?

"I have already mentioned Fert\$mart planning as an option to 3 or 4 farmers, and all have expressed an interest in using it" - VIC.

“I now try to encourage farmers to test the whole farm. I then use historic soil test records with the whole farm testing to target underperforming paddocks. It helps to determine why there are problems. We can then target our solutions.” – SA.

“The Fert\$mart program assists dairy farmers make decisions that cost effectively improve the farm feedbase in an environmentally sound way” – VIC.



### Fert\$mart Plan

The “Fert\$mart Tick” can be displayed on a fertiliser management plan when all the following criteria have been met:

- ✓ Farm areas where fertiliser is to be applied have been identified (e.g. Farm Management Zones (FMZs) are either mapped or described by paddock names and referenced in the recommendations).
- ✓ Soil constraints and other production limitations have been considered before making recommendations (See [Chap 16.2.2](#), “The Dairy Soils and Fertiliser Manual”).
- ✓ Soil fertility trends based on current soil tests, previous soil test records (if available), and the [Regional Soil Fertility Guidelines](#) have been considered (See [Chap 16.2.3](#)).
- ✓ Basic soil health indicators have been considered (See [Chap 16.2.4](#)).
- ✓ Crop or pasture condition has been considered (See [Chap 16.2.5](#)).
- ✓ Strategic use of on-farm nutrients (e.g. effluent and manure) has been explored and economic options for reuse considered (See [Chap 16.2.6](#)).
- ✓ A nutrient budget has been used to work out the P, K (S if regionally applicable) maintenance requirements (See [Chap 16.2.8](#)).
- ✓ A documented 4Rs fertiliser program has been provided to the farmer (either a soft or hard copy) which describes the products, rates, place/placement, and timing for each FMZ (See [Chap 16.2.7](#)).
- ✓ Managing environmental, human, and animal health risks of the fertiliser program have been assessed, documented and conveyed to the farmer.

### Further information

Fert\$mart Plan Example:

<http://fertsmart.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/PM.16.001-F.-Smart-Soil-Fertiliser-Management-Plan.-Example-1.pdf>

Fert\$mart Planning Cycle (Steps):

<http://fertsmart.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au/dairy-soils-and-fertiliser-manual/chapter-1-fertmart-planning/1-8-fertmart-planning-checklist/>

The Dairy Soils and Fertiliser Manual:

<http://fertsmart.dairyingfortomorrow.com.au/dairy-soils-and-fertiliser-manual/>

For further information, please contact your Dairy Australia Regional Development Program or the Fert\$mart Coordinator: Rick Kowitz [rick@kowitz.net](mailto:rick@kowitz.net)