

Fert\$mart for Dairy Farmers

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 provides the knowhow and 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 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'.

How do I get started?

Agronomists are already working with dairy farmers to prepare Fert\$mart Plans in some areas. If there are no Fert\$mart planning groups in your area, ask your agronomist if they can prepare a Fert\$mart Plan for your farm.

What's involved?

Fert\$mart Planning starts with a visit from your agronomist to carry out soil testing and field checks. Your agronomist will also need access to some farm records including milk production, fertiliser use, and purchased feeds. This information is used to work out what fertilisers are needed to meet your current production targets.

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.

"I have made changes with regard to effluent disposal as a result of the nutrient management plan" – Katandra, 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 and referenced in the recommendations.
- ✓ Soil constraints and other production limitations have been considered before making recommendations.
- ✓ Soil fertility trends based on current soil tests, previous soil test records (if available), and the Regional Soil Fertility Guidelines have been considered.
- ✓ Basic soil health indicators have been considered.
- ✓ Crop or pasture condition has been considered.
- ✓ Strategic use of on-farm nutrients (e.g. effluent and manure) has been explored and economic options for reuse considered.
- ✓ A nutrient budget has been used to work out the P, K (S if regionally applicable) maintenance requirements.
- ✓ 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 paddock or farm management zone.
- ✓ Managing environmental, human, and animal health risks of the fertiliser program have been assessed, documented and conveyed to the farmer.

More information

The following information may assist in preparation of a Fert\$mart Plan.

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