

## NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT (Acre) 590

### DEFINITION

Managing the amount (rate), source, placement (method of application), and timing of plant nutrients and soil amendments.

### PURPOSE

- To budget, supply, and conserve nutrients for plant production.
- To minimize agricultural nonpoint source pollution of surface and groundwater resources.
- To properly utilize manure or organic by-products as a plant nutrient source.
- To protect air quality by reducing odors, nitrogen emissions (ammonia, oxides of nitrogen), and the formation of atmospheric particulates.
- To maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil.

### CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to all lands where plant nutrients and soil amendments are applied. This standard does not apply to one-time nutrient application to establish perennial crops.

## CRITERIA

### General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

A nutrient budget for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium must be developed that considers all potential sources of nutrients including, but not limited to, green manures, legumes, crop residues, compost, animal manure, organic by-products, biosolids, waste water, organic matter, soil biological activity, commercial fertilizer, and irrigation water.

Enhanced efficiency fertilizers, used in the State must be defined by the Association of American Plant Food Control Officials (AAPFCO) and be accepted for use by the State fertilizer control official, or similar authority, with responsibility for verification of product guarantees, ingredients (by AAPFCO definition) and label claims.

For nutrient risk assessment policy and procedures see Title 190, General Manual (GM), Part 402, Nutrient Management, and Title 190, National Instruction (NI), Part 302, Nutrient Management Policy Implementation.

To avoid salt damage, the rate and placement of applied nitrogen and potassium in starter fertilizer must be consistent with land-grant university guidelines, or industry practice recognized by the land-grant university.

The NRCS-approved nutrient risk assessment for nitrogen must be completed on all sites. Refer to the Michigan Leaching Index (LI) found in Section II of the FOTG.

The NRCS-approved nutrient risk assessment for phosphorus must be completed on all sites. Refer to the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment tool found in Section IV of the FOTG.

On organic operations, the nutrient sources and management must be consistent with the USDA's National Organic Program.

Areas contained within minimum application setbacks (e.g., sinkholes, wellheads, gullies, ditches, or surface inlets) must receive nutrients consistent with the setback restrictions.

Applications of irrigation water must minimize the risk of nutrient loss to surface and groundwater.

Soil pH must be maintained in a range that enhances an adequate level for crop nutrient availability and utilization. Refer to MSUE Bulletin E471, Lime for Michigan Soils.

#### **Soil, Manure, and Tissue Sampling and Laboratory Analyses (Testing)**

Nutrient planning must be based on current soil, manure, and (where used as supplemental information) tissue test results developed in accordance with land-grant university guidance, or industry practice, if recognized by the university

Current soil tests are those that are no older than 3 years, but may be taken on an interval recommended by the land-grant university or as required by State code. The area represented by a soil test must be that acreage recommended by the land-grant university. Refer to MSUE Bulletin E498 and E498S

In vegetable crop and other high value cropping systems, sample soil and test at least every two years, but annual testing is encouraged. Where high value crops are rotated with field crops, soils sample and test after the high value crop is harvested.

Sod production fields should be soil sampled and tested prior to crop establishment.

For fields where perennial woody ornamentals are grown, sample and test soils every two to three years.

Where a conservation management unit (CMU) is used as the basis for a sampling unit, all acreage in the CMU must have similar soil type, cropping history, and management practice treatment.

The soil and tissue tests must include analyses pertinent to monitoring or amending the annual nutrient budget, e.g., pH, electrical conductivity (EC) and sodicity where salts are a concern, soil organic matter, phosphorus, potassium, or other nutrients and test for nitrogen where applicable. Follow land-grant university guidelines regarding required analyses.

Soil test analyses must be performed by laboratories successfully meeting the requirements and performance standards of the North American Proficiency Testing Program-Performance Assessment Program (NAPT-PAP) under the auspices of the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) and NRCS, or other NRCS-approved program that considers laboratory performance and proficiency to assure accuracy of soil test results. Alternate proficiency testing programs must have solid stakeholder (e.g., water quality control entity, NRCS State staff, growers, and others) support and be regional in scope.

Nutrient values of manure, organic by-products and biosolids must be determined prior to land application.

Manure analyses must include, at minimum, total nitrogen (N), ammonium N, total phosphorus (P) or P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, total potassium (K) or K<sub>2</sub>O, and percent solids, or follow land-grant university guidance regarding required analyses.

Manure, organic by-products, and biosolids samples must be collected and analyzed at least annually, or more frequently if needed to account for operational changes (feed management, animal type, manure handling strategy, etc.) impacting manure nutrient concentrations. If no operational changes occur, less frequent manure testing is allowable where operations can document a stable level of nutrient concentrations for the preceding three consecutive years, unless federal, State, or local regulations require more frequent testing.

Samples must be collected, prepared, stored, and shipped, following land-grant university guidance or industry practice.

When planning for new or modified livestock operations, acceptable “book values” recognized by the NRCS [e.g., NRCS Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook or Midwest Plan Service (MWPS-18)] and the land-grant university, or analyses from similar operations in the geographical area, may be used if they accurately estimate nutrient output from the proposed operation.

Manure testing analyses must be performed by laboratories successfully meeting the requirements and performance standards of the Manure Testing Laboratory Certification program (MTLCP) under the auspices of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, or other NRCS- approved program that considers laboratory performance and proficiency to assure accurate manure test results.

### **Nutrient Application Rates**

Planned nutrient application rates for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium must not exceed land-grant university guidelines or industry practice when recognized by the

university. Refer to Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) nutrient recommendations given in the References section. For organic operations refer to University of Georgia Circular 853.

At a minimum, determination of rate must be based on crop/cropping sequence, current soil test results, realistic yield goals, and NRCS-approved nutrient risk assessments.

If the land-grant university does not provide specific guidance that meets these criteria, application rates must be based on plans that consider realistic yield goals and associated plant nutrient uptake rates.

Realistic yield goals must be established based on historical yield data, soil productivity information, climatic conditions, nutrient test results, level of management, and local research results considering comparable production conditions.

Estimates of yield response must consider factors such as poor soil quality, drainage, pH, salinity, etc., prior to assuming that nitrogen and/or phosphorus are deficient.

For new crops or varieties, industry-demonstrated yield, and nutrient utilization information may be used until land-grant university information is available.

Lower-than-recommended nutrient application rates are permissible if the grower’s objectives are met.

Applications of biosolids, starter fertilizers, or pop-up fertilizers must be accounted for in the nutrient budget.

### **Nutrient Sources**

Nutrient sources utilized must be compatible with the application timing, tillage and planting system, soil properties, crop, crop rotation, soil organic content, and local climate to minimize risk to the environment.

## **Nutrient Application Timing and Placement**

Timing and placement of all nutrients must correspond as closely as practical with plant nutrient uptake (utilization by crops), and consider nutrient source, cropping system limitations, soil properties, weather conditions, drainage system, soil biology, and nutrient risk assessment results.

Nutrients must not be surface-applied if nutrient losses offsite are likely. This precludes manure application when the top 2 inches of soil are saturated from rainfall or snow melt.

Winter manure application is allowed on frozen or snow-covered ground if a field specific assessment using the Michigan NRCS Manure Application Risk Index (MARI) ranks the field “Low” or “Very Low”. A “Medium” MARI rating may be used if additional conservation and management practices are chosen to bring the MARI score up to “Low” ranking. The additional practices must be documented in the conservation plan. Fields with a “High” rating shall not be used for winter manure application. Refer to Michigan NRCS Agronomy Technical Note #35, ‘The MARI Excel Spreadsheet.

### **Additional Criteria to Minimize Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution of Surface and Groundwater**

Planners must use the current NRCS-approved nitrogen, phosphorus, and soil erosion risk assessment tools to assess the risk of nutrient and soil loss. Identified resource concerns must be addressed to meet current planning criteria (quality criteria). Technical criteria for risk assessments can be found in NI-190-302.

When there is a high risk of transport of nutrients, conservation practices must be coordinated to avoid, control, or trap manure and nutrients before they can leave the field by surface or subsurface drainage (e.g., tile). Use conservation practices that slow runoff, reduce erosion, and increase infiltration, e.g., filter strips, cover crops, or residue and tillage management. These practices can also reduce the loss of nitrates or soluble phosphorus.

The number of applications and the application rates must also be considered to limit the transport of nutrients to tile.

Nutrients must be applied with the right placement, in the right amount, at the right time, and from the right source to minimize nutrient losses to surface and groundwater. The following nutrient use efficiency strategies or technologies must be considered:

- slow and controlled release fertilizers
- nitrification and urease inhibitors
- enhanced efficiency fertilizers
- incorporation or injection
- timing and number of applications
- soil nitrate and organic N testing
- coordinate nutrient applications with optimum crop nutrient uptake
- Corn Stalk Nitrate Test (CSNT), Pre-Sidedress Nitrate Test (PSNT), and Pre-Plant Soil Nitrate Test (PPSN)
- tissue testing, chlorophyll meters, and spectral analysis technologies

### **Additional Criteria Applicable to Properly Utilize Manure or Organic By-Products as a Plant Nutrient Source**

When manures are applied, and soil salinity is a concern, salt concentrations must be

monitored to prevent potential crop damage and/or reduced soil quality.

The total single application of liquid manure:

- must not exceed the soil's infiltration or water holding capacity
- be based on crop rooting depth
- must be adjusted to avoid runoff or loss to subsurface tile drains.

Crop production activities and nutrient use efficiency technologies must be coordinated to take advantage of mineralized plant-available nitrogen to minimize the potential for nitrogen losses due to denitrification or ammonia volatilization.

Nitrogen and phosphorus application rates must be planned based on risk assessment results as determined by NRCS-approved nitrogen and phosphorus risk assessment tools.

For fields receiving manure, where the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment results equate to LOW risk and the soil test phosphorus is less than 150 ppm Bray P1, manure application rates may be based on the nitrogen fertilizer recommendation. If the field is LOW risk, two, three or four crop years of phosphorus removal may be applied, but no additional fertilizer or manure P can be applied for the second, third or fourth crop year. The calculated manure application rate shall not apply more plant-available nitrogen than the amount of the nitrogen fertilizer recommendation for the crop to be grown the first year.

For fields receiving manure, where the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment results equate to MEDIUM risk, manure shall be applied at the phosphorus removal rate. Up to two crop years of phosphorus

removal may be applied, but no additional fertilizer or manure phosphorus can be applied for the second crop year. The calculated manure application rate shall not apply more plant-available nitrogen than the amount of the nitrogen fertilizer recommendation for the crop to be grown the first year.

For fields receiving manure, where the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment results equate to HIGH risk, *no manure or phosphorus fertilizer* may be applied except for starter fertilizer on corn under the following conditions (MSUE bulletin E2904):

- Fertilizer shall only be banded, not broadcast;
- Starter fertilizer shall only be applied when Bray P1 soil test is less than 60 ppm;
- A maximum of 25 lbs P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>/ acre may be applied in low residue fields or up to 40 lbs P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>/ acre when planting into heavy residue.

Manure application of greater than four crop year's phosphorus removal is not allowed.

Regardless of the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment score, if field soil test phosphorus is greater than 150 ppm, then no manure application is allowed, with the exception of dilute wastewater. The following restrictions on application of on-farm generated wastewater must be followed:

- The on-farm generated wastewater must have one percent or less solids;
- Application is limited to rates that supply 75 percent or less of the annual phosphorus removal for the current crop or next crop to be harvested;

- Annual sampling of the applied wastewater to determine its P content;
- No other phosphorus can be applied to the crop field from other sources;
- Soil P test levels must show a progressive decline over time;
- Irrigated wastewater shall use irrigation scheduling to avoid overapplication.

Manure or organic by-products may be applied on legumes at rates equal to the estimated removal of nitrogen in harvested plant biomass.

In pasture systems where the grazed forage is the sole feed source for livestock, nutrients from manure deposited by the grazing livestock will not exceed the nutrient requirements of the pasture forage. Pasture systems utilizing supplemental feed often result in manure nutrient deposition in excess of pasture forage requirements. Quantify available nutrient deposition based on livestock feed balance.

**Additional Criteria to Protect Air Quality by Reducing Odors, Nitrogen Emissions and the Formation of Atmospheric Particulates**

To address air quality concerns caused by odor, nitrogen, sulfur, and/or particulate emissions; the source, timing, amount, and placement of nutrients must be adjusted to minimize the negative impact of these emissions on the environment and human health. **One or more of the following may be used:**

- slow or controlled release fertilizers
- nitrification inhibitors
- urease inhibitors

- incorporation
- injection

Manure applications shall be managed to avoid and minimize nuisance odor conditions. **One or more of the following conditions will be implemented:**

- Avoid spreading when wind is blowing towards populated areas;
- Avoid spreading on weekend/holidays when neighbors are likely to be engaged in nearby outdoor or recreational activities;
- Use available weather information to minimize risk of offsite movement of nuisance odor;
- Establish natural vegetation barriers such as windbreaks, and utilize natural vegetative barriers such as woodlots as air filters and visual screens.

Do not apply poultry litter, manure, or organic by-products of similar dryness/density when there is a high probability that wind will blow the material offsite.

**Additional Criteria to Improve or Maintain the Physical, Chemical, and Biological Condition of the Soil to Enhance Soil Quality for Crop Production and Environmental Protection**

Time the application of nutrients to avoid periods when field activities will result in soil compaction.

In areas where salinity is a concern, select nutrient sources that minimize the buildup of soil salts.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Elevated soil test phosphorus levels are detrimental to soil biota. Soil test phosphorus

levels should not exceed State-approved soil test thresholds established to protect the environment.

Use no-till/strip-till in combination with cover crops to sequester nutrients, increase soil organic matter, increase aggregate stability, reduce compaction, improve infiltration, and enhance soil biological activity to improve nutrient use efficiency.

Use nutrient management strategies such as cover crops, crop rotations, and crop rotations with perennials to improve nutrient cycling and reduce energy inputs.

Use variable-rate nitrogen application based on expected crop yields, soil variability, soil nitrate or organic N supply levels, or chlorophyll concentration.

Use variable-rate nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium application rates based on site-specific variability in crop yield, soil characteristics, soil test values, and other soil productivity factors.

Develop site-specific yield maps using a yield monitoring system. Use the data to further diagnose low- and high- yield areas, or zones, and make the necessary management changes. See Title 190, Agronomy Technical Note (TN) 190.AGR.3, Precision Nutrient Management Planning.

Use manure management conservation practices to manage manure nutrients to limit losses prior to nutrient utilization.

Consider applying manure at a rate that will result in an “improving” Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) without exceeding acceptable risk of nitrogen or phosphorus loss

Use legume crops and cover crops to provide nitrogen through biological fixation and nutrient recycling.

Excessive levels of some nutrients can cause induced deficiencies of other nutrients, e.g., high soil test phosphorus levels can result in zinc deficiency in corn.

Use soil tests, plant tissue analyses, and field observations to check for secondary plant nutrient deficiencies or toxicity that may impact plant growth or availability of the primary nutrients.

Use the adaptive nutrient management learning process to improve nutrient use efficiency on farms as outlined in the NRCS’ National Nutrient Policy in GM 190, Part 402, Nutrient Management.

Potassium should not be applied in situations where an excess (greater than soil test potassium recommendation) causes nutrient imbalances in crops or forages.

Workers should be protected from and avoid unnecessary contact with plant nutrient sources. Extra caution must be taken when handling anhydrous ammonia or when dealing with organic wastes stored in unventilated enclosures.

Material generated from cleaning nutrient application equipment should be utilized in an environmentally safe manner. Excess material should be collected and stored or field applied in an appropriate manner.

Nutrient containers should be recycled in compliance with State and local guidelines or regulations.

### **Considerations to Minimize Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution of Surface and Groundwater**

Use application methods and timing strategies that reduce the risk of nutrient transport by ground and surface waters, such as:

- split applications of nitrogen to deliver nutrients during periods of maximum crop utilization,
- banded applications of nitrogen and/or phosphorus to improve nutrient availability,
- drainage water management to reduce nutrient discharge through drainage systems, and
- incorporation of surface-applied manures or organic by-products if precipitation capable of producing runoff or erosion is forecast within the time of planned application.

Use the agricultural chemical storage facility conservation practice to protect air, soil, and water quality.

Use bioreactors and multistage drainage strategies when approved by the land-grant university.

#### **Considerations to Protect Air Quality by Reducing Nitrogen and/or Particulate Emissions to the Atmosphere**

Avoid applying manure and other by-products upwind of inhabited areas.

Use high-efficiency irrigation technologies (e.g., reduced-pressure drop nozzles for center pivots) to reduce the potential for nutrient losses.

#### **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

The following components must be included in the nutrient management plan:

- aerial site photograph(s)/imagery or site map(s), and a soil survey map of the site,
- soil information including: soil type surface texture, pH, drainage class, permeability, available water capacity,

depth to water table, restrictive features, and flooding and/or ponding frequency,

- location of designated sensitive areas and the associated nutrient application restrictions and setbacks,
- for manure applications, location of nearby residences, or other locations where humans may be present on a regular basis, and any identified meteorological (e.g., prevailing winds at different times of the year), or topographical influences that may affect the transport of odors to those locations,
- results of approved risk assessment tools for nitrogen, phosphorus, and erosion losses
- documentation establishing that the application site presents low risk for phosphorus transport to local water when phosphorus is applied in excess of crop requirement.
- current and/or planned plant production sequence or crop rotation,
- soil, water, compost, manure, organic by-product, and plant tissue sample analyses applicable to the plan,
- when soil phosphorus levels are increasing, include a discussion of the risk associated with phosphorus accumulation and a proposed phosphorus draw-down strategy,
- realistic yield goals for the crops,
- complete nutrient budget for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium for the plant production sequence or crop rotation,
- listing and quantification of all nutrient sources and form,

- all enhanced efficiency fertilizer products that are planned for use,
- in accordance with the nitrogen and phosphorus risk assessment tool(s), specify the recommended nutrient application source, timing, amount (except for precision/variable rate applications specify method used to determine rate), and placement of plant nutrients for each field or management unit, and
- guidance for implementation, operation and maintenance, and recordkeeping.

In addition, the following components must be included in a precision/variable rate nutrient management plan:

- Document the geo-referenced field boundary and data collected that was processed and analyzed as a GIS layer or layers to generate nutrient or soil amendment recommendations.
- Document the nutrient recommendation guidance and recommendation equations used to convert the GIS base data layer or layers to a nutrient source material recommendation GIS layer or layers.
- Document if a variable rate nutrient or soil amendment application was made.
- Provide application records per management zone or as applied map within individual field boundaries (or electronic records) documenting source, timing, method, and rate of all applications that resulted from use of the precision agriculture process for nutrient or soil amendment applications.
- Maintain the electronic records of the GIS data layers and nutrient applications for at least 5 years.

If increases in soil phosphorus levels are expected (i.e., when N-based rates are used), the nutrient management plan must document:

- the soil phosphorus levels at which it is desirable to convert to phosphorus based planning,
- the potential plan for soil test phosphorus drawdown from the production and harvesting of crops, and
- management activities or techniques used to reduce the potential for phosphorus transport and loss,
- for AFOs, a quantification of manure produced in excess of crop nutrient requirements, and
- a long-term strategy and proposed implementation timeline for reducing soil P to levels that protect water quality,

## **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Conduct periodic plan reviews to determine if adjustments or modifications to the plan are needed. At a minimum, plans must be reviewed and revised, as needed with each soil test cycle, changes in manure volume or analysis, crops, or crop management.

Fields receiving animal manures and/or biosolids must be monitored for the accumulation of heavy metals and phosphorus in accordance with land-grant university guidance and State law.

Significant changes in animal numbers, management, and feed management will necessitate additional manure analyses to establish a revised average nutrient content.

Calibrate application equipment to ensure accurate distribution of material at planned rates.

Document the nutrient application rate. When the applied rate differs from the planned rate, provide appropriate documentation for the change.

Records must be maintained for at least 5 years to document plan implementation and maintenance. As applicable, records include:

- soil, plant tissue, water, manure, and organic by-product analyses resulting in recommendations for nutrient application,
- quantities, analyses and sources of nutrients applied,
- dates, and method(s) of nutrient applications, source of nutrients, and rates of application,
- weather conditions and soil moisture at the time of application; lapsed time to manure incorporation; rainfall or irrigation event,
- crops planted, planting and harvest dates, yields, nutrient analyses of harvested biomass, and crop residues removed,
- dates of plan review, name of reviewer, and recommended changes resulting from the review, and
- all enhanced efficiency fertilizer products used.

Additional records for precision/variable rate sites must include:

- maps identifying the variable application source, timing, amount, and placement of all plant nutrients applied, and
- GPS-based yield maps for crops where yields can be digitally collected.

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