

Industry Position on Biodiversity

The Issue

Biodiversity is fundamental to the well-being of people and the future of our planet. Global efforts and concrete actions are required to halt its continuous decline. Mineral fertilizer use is often seen as negatively impacting biodiversity.

Position / Key Messages

Plant nutrients are essential for life on Earth. They are critical for the health of soils, plants and animals, help maintain ecosystems and contribute to the production of nutritious food for a growing population. Fertilizers allow for greatly increased productivity on arable land, thus forestalling deforestation and its associated GHG emissions.

Both excess and insufficient fertilizer use negatively affect the ecosystem and natural habitat balance. The result is a pressure on the agriculture and food systems.

Underuse of fertilizers has many negative implications for biodiversity, climate and food preservation. Nutrient-depleted soils trigger a degradation process in nature, marked by accelerated erosion and lack of water retention, depletion of soil organic carbon, an increased loss of biodiversity, poor plant health and reduced crop production.

The fertilizer industry takes seriously the severe environmental implications for freshwater and marine life that over-use or inefficient use of mineral and organic fertilizers can cause. Algae blooms that result from an over-enrichment of nutrients (eutrophication) are often aggravated by temperature increases due to climate change.

The industry recommends the development and implementation of regionally customized nutrient load reduction targets and roadmaps. The roadmaps would be targeted and adapted to each eutrophic zone and areas that are at risk. They provide the basis for coordinated, multi-stakeholder actions to reduce nutrient loads from multiple sources, including fertilizer use on agricultural land.

Background

IFA Members take their responsibility seriously and are actively engaged in public-private partnerships that aim to change farming practices through training, recognition, and certification.

The Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan in Australia is one of the scalable examples of a successful multi-stakeholder initiative that was able to set and achieve specific targets for nutrient load reductions.