



# Media Statement

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23 May 2019

## Fertiliser programs a win-win for South West farmers and waterways

South West farmers are invited to join in a soil testing program and fertiliser machinery demonstration days.

Expressions of interest for the Sustainable Agriculture program open on 1 June 2019 and successful applicants will receive independently accredited soil testing across their entire farms, in order to tailor fertiliser applications to each paddock.

Farmers can also learn how to test and calibrate fertiliser spreaders at one of five industry-leading Accu-Spread demonstrations being held across several days in June on farms around Donnybrook, Denmark, Mt Barker, Augusta and Busselton.

The Fertcare-accredited demonstrations with interstate specialist, Russell Nichol, offer a rare opportunity for South West farmers to eliminate fertiliser 'guesswork'.

Dr Deborah Holtham, coordinator of Sustainable Agriculture through the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's (DWER) Regional Estuaries Initiative (REI), said it was not only important to estimate fertiliser needs but also to test each paddock.

"Over-fertilising areas of your farm – through either uneven distribution or not knowing the requirements of your soil – can result in excess nutrients that are not taken up by plants or soil, washing into our waterways," said Dr Holtham.

"A combination of soil testing, good recommendations, and spreader calibration can prevent farmers losing thousands of dollars in fertiliser run-off.

"Soil testing with more than 900 farmers in the past 10 years has shown that applying phosphorus on 65-80 per cent of paddocks will not increase yields, so the money would be better spent targeting nutrient deficiencies that will impact production levels.

"It's similar for fertiliser spreaders. A large number of spreaders previously tested did not distribute fertiliser as evenly as the farmer expected, or to the Accu-Spread standard – meaning some parts of the paddock received excess fertiliser while other parts were deficient."

Register for a demonstration day or the soil testing program at [rei.dwer.wa.gov.au](http://rei.dwer.wa.gov.au). Funded through the REI and Revitalising Geographe Waterways programs, these opportunities are delivered in partnership between DWER, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Peel-Harvey Catchment Council, Leschenault Catchment Council, GeoCatch, Lower Blackwood LCDC, Wilson Inlet Catchment Committee, Oyster Harbour Catchment Group, and Fertilizer Australia.

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