



Farmers Urged To Test For Phosphorus

by *Michael Brubaker*

(NAPSA)—A coalition of leading U.S. agronomists is advising farmers to test their soils and add phosphorus safely where levels are too low.

A major study indicates that 47 percent of North American

public sectors including the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Cargill Crop Nutrition, and the Potash and Phosphate Institute.

Farmers shouldn't assume that phosphorus is abundant on their cropland or that fertilizing



Wheat plot without phosphorus.



Wheat plot with phosphorus.

cropland has “barely adequate to inadequate” levels of phosphorus—one of the three most vital nutrients in crop development, along with nitrogen and potassium.

As the plant's “battery,” phosphorus stimulates early plant growth and maturity, helps absorb other nutrients, and is essential for seed formation. Without phosphorus, nitrogen is used less efficiently, and is more likely to leach into the surrounding soil. Numerous studies on a variety of crops have established that phosphorus returns a value on investment in the year of application and beyond, especially where soil has low or medium phosphorus levels.

The coalition is comprised of agronomy experts from private and

will automatically harm the environment.

When phosphorus is applied where levels are low, it adheres quickly to the soil, and can be contained using basic erosion control techniques, which farmers are urged to practice. Without phosphorus, nitrogen will leach more easily.

Farmers should take advantage of advances such as soil sampling based on grids, and variable rate fertilizer application to ensure that phosphorus is applied only where it's needed.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.P101.org.

Michael Brubaker is a 25-year practicing agronomist and an advising member of the Phosphorus 101 Education Project.