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**Coalition launches 4R Plus nutrient and conservation stewardship program for Iowa's farmers**

[DES MOINES, Iowa] – Today a group of agricultural and conservation stakeholders announced the launch of 4R Plus, a nutrient management and conservation program that equips Iowa farmers with the tools and resources to protect and enhance Iowa soils.

“CF Industries, along with The Nature Conservancy, came together with a vision for a program that would empower Iowa farmers and their efforts to improve soil health,” says Tony Will, president and CEO of CF Industries.

Support of this program has expanded to 30 organizations, including state commodity groups, agribusinesses, conservation organizations, government agencies, universities and others.

“We all have the same goal: to build upon the good work Iowa farmers are doing and provide them with more tools and resources to help them implement practices that enhance crop growth and boost yield potential and return on investment while safeguarding some of the best soil in the world,” says Will.

4R Plus focuses on nutrient management and conservation practices for today's farms. Improving soil health starts with following the 4R nutrient stewardship practices – right source, right rate, right time and right place – to fully optimize the nutrients farmers apply. The “Plus” refers to conservation practices that can boost production, increase soil resiliency, reduce erosion and runoff, and improve water quality. Together, 4R nutrient stewardship and conservation practices can help farmers achieve healthier soils and ultimately a more productive crop now and in the future.

## **Approaching 4R nutrient stewardship**

4R nutrient stewardship goes beyond on-farm sustainability benefits. Using the 4Rs can improve production and farmer profitability while enhancing environmental protection on and beyond the farm.

The Fertilizer Institute (TFI), a collaborator in 4R Plus, recognizes this program as a way for farmers to embrace the 4Rs.

“4R stewardship is an innovative approach to managing nutrients to meet the crop’s needs while minimizing nutrient losses from the field,” says Lara Moody, vice president of stewardship and sustainability programs at TFI.

Moody stresses that whether it’s the nutrient source, rate, time or place, farmers have to make nutrient decisions based on information specific to their farm, soil characteristics and operational logistics.

“Farmers should work with their advisers to select specific 4R practices to optimize fertilizer inputs for their individual operations,” adds Moody. “The 4Rs, when combined with the ‘Plus’ conservation practices, can help farmers achieve their production, economic and environmental goals.”

## **Importance of the “Plus” conservation practices**

4R nutrient management and loss reduction are more important than ever. With the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy’s goal to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous loads in Iowa waters by 45 percent, farmers are looking for ways they can contribute to this goal. A good place to start is conservation.

Conservation practices help retain moisture, soil and nutrients, and reduce erosion and runoff – resulting in healthier soil and cleaner water. These practices are even more effective when targeted in areas with the greatest runoff, nutrient loss and soil loss.

Marty Adkins, assistant state conservationist for the Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – another 4R Plus collaborator – sees the need for farmer resources on conservation practices.

“There’s a natural link between sound nutrient management and conservation practices resulting in better soil health, water quality and farmer profitability,” says Adkins. “NRCS is pleased to work with other organizations to help farmers and agronomists better understand soil health, why it’s important and how it can be achieved.”

Adkins adds that a good first step is to develop a conservation plan. “These plans help farmers see where they stand now and what conservation practices to consider. A conservation plan also can help farmers access farm programs, which can aid in the costs of implementing these practices.”

Shawn Richmond, environmental technology director for the Agribusiness Association of Iowa, says, “Depending on the farm, there are a variety of conservation practices to consider. Cover crops and strip-till or no-till are in-field practices that can minimize soil erosion and improve water infiltration, while stream buffers and wetlands act as edge-of-field filters for surface and tile water.”

## A growing effort, off and on the farm

Greg Wandrey, Iowa agriculture program director for The Nature Conservancy and coordinator of the 4R Plus program, believes it takes everyone working together to help Iowa farmers achieve economic and environmental success, and finding the right 4R Plus practices for a field or farm is key.

“The purpose of bringing these stakeholders together and ultimately the 4R Plus program is to provide consistent messages to farmers about 4R nutrient stewardship and conservation practices that are available for their farms. Farmers and their advisers can work together to assess economic and environmental goals and make a plan to adopt practices that help them achieve those results.”

Wandrey adds, “More than 80,000 Iowa farmers are growing food, fiber and fuel on 23 million acres. Change happens on an individual level, but if we took an all-hands-on-deck approach to nutrient stewardship and conservation practices, just think of the results we’d see.”

To learn more about 4R Plus and resources available for getting started, visit [www.4rplus.org](http://www.4rplus.org).

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4R Plus is a nutrient management and conservation program to make farmers aware of practices that bolster production, build soil health and improve water quality in Iowa. The program is guided by a coalition of more than 25 organizations, including agribusinesses, conservation organizations, commodity and trade associations, government agencies and academic institutions. To learn more, visit [www.4RPlus.org](http://www.4RPlus.org).

Graphics included:



4R Plus was introduced today in Iowa. The program involves using precise nutrient management to provide nutrients when the crops need them and targeted conservation practices that enhance soil health and improve water quality.

# 4R Plus