

Global Fertilizer Day: Meeting future food needs

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Opinion Plus

Jacob Hansen explains how the fertilizer industry's *Feeding Life 2030* vision can continue feeding plants, farmers, people and Europe's economy while responding to fundamental societal challenges.



Photo Credit: Fertilizers Europe

Commemorating the invention of the Haber-Bosch nitrogen fixation process for synthesising ammonia, Global Fertilizer Day on October 13 aims to educate people on the benefits of the responsible use of fertilizers and encourage sustainable, agricultural innovation.

Around half the World's population is fed thanks to mineral fertilizers. With the world's population expected to hit 8.6 billion people by 2030 global food supply will need to rise. We need to find a way over the coming years to ensure we can feed - what is essentially the equivalent of an extra population of Germany - every year.

The world needs more food but also fewer emissions. Europe's ambition to lead the global battle against climate change means all sectors will have to play their part.

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European Commission president-elect Ursula von der Leyen's letter to Janusz Wojciechowski the agriculture commissioner-designate argues that as part of the EU's zero-pollution ambition, he should - among other agricultural inputs - aim to reduce fertilizers.

This ambition only makes sense if any focus targets the better use of fertilizers, increasing their use efficiency - whether the source is manure or mineral fertilizers - as ultimately plant production relies on sufficient nutrients for healthy plant growth.

In order to provide European consumers with high grade, nutritious, diverse and sustainably-produced food, the highest quality plant nutrients are required.

The question is, therefore, how can we supply enough nutrients for plants that can feed a growing global population in a more energy efficient and environmentally friendlier way?

Fertilizers Europe's latest report, *FeedingLife 2030* is a vision based on our industry's mission to continue feeding plants, farmers, people and the European economy while responding to fundamental societal challenges linked to climate change and sustainability.

On the fertilizer use side, 'applying more knowledge per hectare' should be the mantra for the future of farming in Europe. Better fertilizer products, precisely targeted to specific crops, combined with new tools and real-time data opens a new range of possibilities.

Applying knowledge is also likely to improve yields and provide farmers with a decent return on their investment. It will also have a very positive effect on the environment, as better and more targeted fertilisation will increase plant growth and diminish losses to the environment.

"Fertilizers Europe's latest report, *FeedingLife 2030* is a vision based on our industry's mission to continue feeding plants, farmers, people and the European economy while responding to fundamental societal challenges linked to climate change and sustainability"

Farmers and growers will become more knowledgeable and demanding in terms of nutrient input by 2030 and are expected to focus increasingly on nutrient use efficiency, producing sustainably and profitably, optimising overall application and increasing yields.

To do this, farmers will rely more on professional advice, planning and new tools as well as technologies that will ensure they apply fertilizers where and when they required and in the exact amount needed.

The European fertilizer industry could, under the right legislative framework, play a vital role in delivering against the EU's ambition to lead sustainable agricultural production. Our 2030 vision could also help Europe maintain a strong industrial base while shifting towards a decarbonised economy.

Fertilizers Europe's *Feeding Life 2030* vision of the evolution of the mineral fertilizer industry is very ambitious and will require commitment from both industry and policymakers. It will allow the European mineral fertilizer industry to evolve in line with the EU's societal and economic ambitions .

I truly hope that the role of fertilizers for food production and our vision for 2030 will lead to a constructive dialogue with EU policymakers and stakeholders on how to best tackle future challenges.

About the author

Jacob Hansen is Director General of Fertilizers Europe

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