

# SOIL TESTING



## DESCRIPTION

Routine soil testing is a key tool in nutrient management for crop producers. Nitrate-nitrogen should be measured annually in all fields receiving nitrogen or organic amendments such as manure, compost or biosolids. Routine analysis such as pH, soluble salts, organic matter, phosphorus, potassium, micronutrients and soil texture should be conducted once per rotation or every other year for continuous cropping.

Following nutrient application rates recommended by an industry standardized laboratory will guide establishment of realistic production goals based on soil condition and climate while avoiding risk of offsite contamination.

## BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- A sound fertilizer or manure recommendation depends on a quality soil sample.
- A composite soil sample should represent a uniform field area.
- Use a systematic sampling scheme, and a minimum of 15 subsamples throughout the field, regardless of acreage.
- Sampling depth depends on the crop and the tillage depth.
- Sample most fields every year for nitrate analyses.
- Thoroughly air dry all soil samples within 12 hours after sampling.
- [See Selecting an Analytical Laboratory](#) for important information on choosing a reputable lab.

## IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Cost= LOW

Operation and Maintenance= LOW

Training= LOW

## POLLUTANT REMOVAL

Nutrients: excess soil N following harvest is subject to leaching to groundwater. High soil test P has been identified as a significant variable for runoff losses to surface water.