

SOIL TESTING

Why is it Essential?

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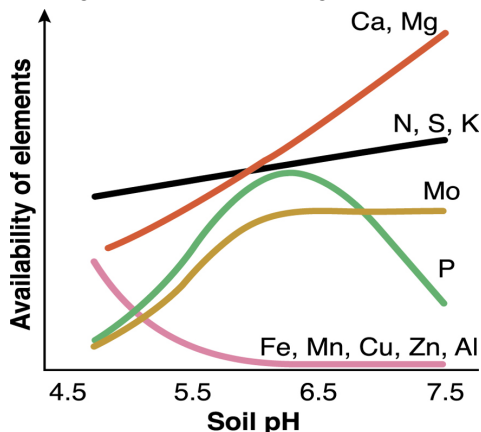
Soil Management is a topic of increasing interest and importance among farmers, growers and the world at large. It is being driven by a diverse range of issues, from practical farming concerns like increasing and optimizing productivity through to global issues like soil degradation, health and nutrition and the link between soil and climate change. Improving soil quality and soil health is therefore everybody's business.

Most people know that if they don't eat a 'balanced diet' then they will get sick, due to a nutrient (i.e. chemical element like iron and magnesium) deficiency or excess, and if the imbalance is sufficiently severe, then some very unpleasant health effects will occur, including death.

This equally applies to livestock - if the pasture they are eating does not contain sufficient amounts of the nutrients they need and in the right proportions they will not thrive, or worse, become sick.

So what does this mean for soil testing? Well, plants are the foundation of the food chain, and apart from carbon and oxygen that plants get straight out of the air (i.e., they are atmospheric fertilisers), they absorb all the other nutrients they need from the soil. So, if the soil is deficient in one or more nutrients, then the plants are not going to be able to take up enough of those nutrients to grow, or grow as well as they could. The fundamental point of soil testing: is to determine if there are sufficient levels of the essential elements for plants to grow optimally.

Soil testing is now more important than ever because of changes in crop and fertilizer prices. Over the past few years the cost of soil sampling and analysis has not increased much, while fertilizer prices have increased significantly. Not to mention the extensive use of chemical fertiliser is causing detrimental effects on the environment like soil degradation, pollution of dams, rivers, ground and sea water, which makes soil testing an essential tool in Agriculture.



For more accurate fertilizer recommendations and increased efficiency, producers need two things:

1. Better soil samples and soil sample information, as soil sample results are only as good as how well the soil sample

was taken. There are registered laboratories in all provinces of South Africa that can do soil testing. These laboratories have guidelines on how and when to take soil samples.

2. Good Fertilizer recommendations that improve soil quality, enhance yields, are safe for the environment and profitable to the farmer and achieve sustainability on the farm.

The goal of soil testing is to provide an accurate assessment of the soil's fertility status that can be used to make fertilizer recommendations. With the increasing awareness of fertilizer effects on environmental quality, soil tests can also be used to determine where certain fertilizers or soil conditioners should not be applied because they are already in excess.

Soil sampling has always been an important management tool to help producers determine nutrient status and requirement. The basic principles of what constitutes a good soil sample have not changed, but the economic importance is even greater today in terms of using it as a risk management tool to maintain your soil's productivity while still making a profit.

Talborne Organics Technical Services Division offers Remedial & Fertilizer recommendations (based on soil test results) to rectify the following:

- Imbalances in soil chemistry through correct remediation, to improve soil structure and uptake of available fertilizer elements.
- Optimizing crop production and quality through correct fertilizer practices. Accurate fertilizer application will result in big savings.
- Saving on pest & disease control through ensuring strong, healthy and well-nourished crops and a flourishing soil eco-system.

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INPUT: Organic EU
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APPROVED INPUT:
National Organic Program NOP