



# FERTILISER NEWS



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## P & K Usage in Decline...

The latest British Survey of Fertiliser Practice highlights a decline in the application of phosphate and potash fertiliser to arable ground. Over the past 4 years, only 50% of the area is receiving dressings of these nutrients.

This can be partly attributed to the wider spread use of 'organic manures', almost certainly sewage sludge. But this only adds another 20% to the total arable area being treated, and only if all the 'organic manure' is being applied to ground which is not receiving P & K fertiliser. This also raises questions about satisfactory potash reserves on soils notorious for their deficiency, because 'sewage sludge' is really all about phosphate.

Historically, one of the soils that demonstrates widespread potash deficiency is the Icknield Series (most of Hants, Wilts and Dorset). Potash is an essential nutrient to achieve optimum photosynthesis, and at half the price of phosphate, in fertiliser form, it is surprising that some farmers are not seeking to ensure adequate reserves for maximising yields!

## ...and Atmospheric Sulphur Deposition.

Another highlight from the recent British Survey of Fertiliser Practice is that atmospheric sulphur deposition is now so low that it is of no measureable benefit to farm crops.

Again, only 70% of oilseed rape crops are receiving additional sulphur fertiliser, and only 50% of all other combinable crops, of which most sulphur applied is targeted at wheat. That wheat is singled out is not surprising, as sulphur is an essential constituent of protein. But all crops that are top dressed with nitrogen are susceptible to the nitrogen/sulphur ratios being out of balance, when the optimum response from the nitrogen will be quickly impaired

## Market Trends

**Phosphate** – Prices firm moving in to February.

**Potash** – Prices are still gaining momentum over concerns about availability.

**Urea** – Prices are still climbing due to demand in Europe.

**Ammonium Nitrate** – GrowHow January prices are up, with further increases expected going forward.



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