



Tuesday, October 21st, 2025
Assembly Committee on Agriculture

Re: AB 310 Realting to: Creation of a nutrient loss reduction program

Chair Tranel and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Wisconsin Farmers Union on Assembly Bill 310.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the goal of increasing farmer resources to reduce nutrient loss. There is growing interest among farmers in adopting and promoting sustainable agriculture practices that protect soil health and water resources as soil loss in agriculture is occurring at alarming rates due to wind and water erosion. This has led to significant losses in soil fertility and contamination of surface and groundwater sources. We applaud the bill authors in seeking to address this pressing issue.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports the creation of a nutrient loss reduction program, with the following considerations to the current draft to represent the perspective of WFU members.

I. Flexibility in the nitrogen-stabilizing products which are eligible for funding

Current bill language identifies Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizer products as eligible for these grants. The current definition may not encompass all products that could be useful in reducing nutrient loss. It is not immediately clear to retailers if biological products such as humic acid are included in this definition, but such products are found to be useful in increasing fertilizer efficiency and uptake.

Subsidizing the use of EEF products and allowing sales representatives to sign-up farmers increases the chance of misuse or inefficiency. The grant encourages farmers to purchase the EEF products even when they are not necessarily the best product for their fields. We encourage adding an educational component or justification piece to encourage proper use of these tax dollars for efficient products with management scenarios where they will be most effective.

The proposed legislation does not promote split-application of fertilizers, which Wisconsin Farmers Union identifies as a gap. This is a method of fertilizer stabilization that all farmers can use and increases the likelihood of stabilizing nutrients. Split application can reduce the cost of product investment the farmer makes and allows them to make decisions based on weather conditions, reducing the chance of high nutrient loss during very rainy seasons.

II. Technical assistance for Variable Rate Technology (VRT)

Soil sampling is widely available and adopted, however farmers face barriers in the interpretation of soil sample results. In order for soil samples to be properly utilized for variable rate fertilizer application, more technical assistance is needed, especially for small and mid-sized farmers. We support the inclusion of VRT education opportunities for farmers enrolled in this program, additional agronomy

staff support available to farmers, which could include a tie-in to encourage membership in a DATCP-supported Producer-Led Watershed Protection Group. Rather than allocating limited time funding for specific products, it is more effective to increase adoption of new practices by encouraging farmer support and education, rather than product and technology sales alone.

III. Oversight for Nutrient Management Plans

Nutrient Management Plans are already required for all farmers. Of the acres required to be under Nutrient Management Plans in Wisconsin, just 40% of acres are in compliance, and it is widely agreed by farmers that nutrient management plans often aren't used to help with field management decisions. Creating additional incentives for nutrient management without proper support to ensure they are accurately created, monitored, and useful to the farmer only increases the likelihood of wasted dollars by both the general taxpayer and the individual farmer. We recommend that additional education around nutrient management planning in general are built into this legislation and that this bill includes a plan and funding for education for farmers and fertilizer salespeople. One potential avenue for such support could be to Producer-Led Watershed Groups.

IV. Maintain the strong goals set in Wisconsin's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy

Wisconsin's current Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy was published in 2013 and provides an overview of nutrient management activities for point and nonpoint sources. Strong nutrient reduction goals are outlined in this plan, with an updated version slated for December 2025. AB 310 should align with Wisconsin's state strategy, including specific benchmarks for water quality. While this proposal is well intentioned, we want all agencies to be aligned by ensuring that this legislation is integrated into the wider NLRs.

We would further support funding for 1.0 GPR full-time equivalent (FTE) in DATCP to implement the nutrient loss reduction grant program.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this proposed legislation. If you would like to further discuss Wisconsin Farmers Union's position on this matter or be put in touch with members and staff who are familiar with these topics, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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Wisconsin Farmers Union

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