



# Using the supply chain to slash fertilizer pollution

How we're creating market demand for crops that reduce harmful runoff



Fertilizer is the engine of agriculture, helping crops grow.

But if not all of it is absorbed by crops, the runoff pollutes water and air. Runoff from corn crops—which use more fertilizer than any other crop—is partly why lakes, rivers and the Gulf of Mexico are frequently contaminated by algae blooms.

This outgrowth of algae renders drinking water unsafe and kills countless fish, leading to "dead zones" devoid of oxygen.

## How to fix this?

The best solution is the one that most efficiently solves the problem on a large scale, and provides incentives for businesses to become more sustainable. We're doing this by increasing demand for grains grown using optimal fertilizer by addressing every point in the supply chain. Our goal is to change the way all grains are produced in the United States.

**Example:** We worked with Walmart, one of our largest corporate partners, to set aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals.

One way the retailer is meeting this goal is by asking suppliers to cut emissions via better fertilizer use. Walmart's enormous purchasing power makes it worthwhile for suppliers to comply. So far, over 15 food companies representing 30 percent of the U.S. food and beverage market have committed to using fertilizer more efficiently.

At the same time, farmers are seeing the benefits of improving water quality and soil health. EDF has worked with farmers in 12 states to advise them on improving fertilizer efficiency, which can reduce input costs without sacrificing yield. Farmers are also working to implement conservation practices such as cover crops, which can reduce soil erosion and help protect farms from the effects of extreme weather.

"Growers are beginning to understand the need to build resilience into the system. We've had so many floods in the Midwest that no one knows what is normal any more," explains Matt Carstens, of United Suppliers, which is [improving fertilizer use](#) on 10 million acres.

This, in turn, unleashes a cascade of demand for fertilizer-efficient crops that extends throughout the supply chain, from grain buyers, agribusiness companies and to the original source: farmers themselves. Thanks to new technologies and programs, farmers now have many different tools to help them optimize their fertilizer use.

## Help you can help us?

**500,000**

the acreage of crops that are now grown using optimal levels of fertilizer

EDF will continue to push for broader adoption of these practices. The most effective way to support this and other market-based success stories is by [joining our monthly giving program, the EDF EcoPartners](#).

As an EcoPartner, you'll receive special quarterly reports that will keep you informed of our progress.

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