



European Biostimulants Industry Council
www.fertilizer.org

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International Code of Conduct for the Use and Management of Fertilizers

Comments from the European Biostimulant Industry Council (EBIC) on the zero draft (11/05/2018) prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)

EBIC welcomes the development of an International Code of Conduct for the Use and Management of Fertilizers by the FAO. EBIC considers that the Code covers an important topic that merits appropriate reflection, discussion and consultation before being launched. Therefore, the proposed timeline aiming for its adoption at the Committee on Agriculture of the Food and Agriculture Organization (COAG) 2018 is simply too short to develop a credible and comprehensive Code of Conduct for fertilizer use, particularly considering the innovative nature of the sector.

There is significant need for improvement if the FAO is to meet its ambitious objectives it has set out for this International Code of Conduct. It is essential to broaden the scope of the Code to ensure that fertilizer use and management is placed in a holistic context of plant nutrition and soil fertility management.

EBIC therefore calls for the adoption of the Code of Conduct to be delayed until the COAG meeting in 2020, which would leave adequate time for consideration of the draft and therefore the adoption of a workable and respected International Code of Conduct on the Use and Management of Fertilizers.

That being said, EBIC would already like to provide its preliminary comments on the current zero draft. Most importantly,

- EBIC calls on the FAO and ITPS **to dedicate more space to the role of complementary technologies** such as plant biostimulants in integrated plant nutrition and soil fertility management in the Code. At the moment, the only mention of plant biostimulants (3.7.5) regardless the need to demonstrate effectiveness. While this is an important issue, a comprehensive code would dedicate space to outlining the contributions of appropriate biostimulant use to contribute to the objectives of the code.
- EBIC advocates **a more holistic concept of plant nutrition and soil fertility management that goes beyond nutrient stewardship alone**. For example, the important role of many innovative fertilizing products, including biostimulants, in maintaining and enhancing soil biodiversity, which is critical for optimal nutrient use efficiency. It is crucial that the Code does not focus solely on mineral fertilizers, but rather encourages and anticipates continuing growth in the use of innovative fertilizing products.
- The role of integrated plant nutrition and soil fertility management in contribution to **adaptation to climate change** deserves more attention in the Code. The FAO asserts that “climate change threatens our ability to ensure global food security, eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development”.¹ It is therefore crucial to highlight the potential of fertilizing products, including biostimulants, to make plants more adaptable and resilient to abiotic stress in a bid to counter these negative impacts of climate change.

With the integration of these concepts throughout the draft and adequate time for discussion and debate around the issues at hand, EBIC believes that the FAO will be able to develop and adopt a comprehensive, ambitious and valuable International Code of Conduct by COAG 2020. EBIC is available for further consultation on the Code at any time.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/climate-change/en/>