

Fertilizer Manual



Fertilizers Manual

**This Manual is a Successor to and in part a revision of the
IFDC/UNIDO**

Editors:

**United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and
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Preface

According to the United Nations, world population will reach 8.5×10^9 in 2025. Over 93% of the growth will occur in the developing countries. Such unprecedented growth in population will create equally unprecedented pressures on the natural resource base—land, water, and air—to produce adequate food, fiber, and raw materials to meet the growing demand.

The United Nations projects that the number of people living in absolute poverty will increase from 1.2×10^9 today to 1.5×10^9 by 2025. Today more than 700 million people in the developing countries do not have access to sufficient food to lead healthy, productive lives. If current trends in population growth and food production continue, by the year 2025, the World Bank estimates that Africa alone will have an annual food shortage of 250 million tonnes.

To solve these seemingly insurmountable problems, the United Nations forecasts that agricultural output must be tripled and people must have the income to buy it. With increasingly limited land under cultivation, sustainable food security cannot be achieved without the benefits of intensified agriculture—the key to alleviating poverty. The adoption of improved technology and the application of modern inputs of agriculture, including inorganic and organic fertilizers, can significantly boost food supply and help to protect the environment. In fact, Dr. Norman Borlaug, 1970 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, has said that “the use of chemical fertilizers must be expanded two- to threefold to maintain soil fertility and productivity in the developing countries over the next 25 years if the world is to feed itself.”

The publication of this edition of the *Fertilizer Manual* is timely in that the World Food Summit was held in Rome in November 1996. At this Summit, policymakers from around the world discussed the global challenges created by a burgeoning population, shrinking land area available for food production, and mounting food insecurity.

The last revision of the *Fertilizer Manual* was published in 1979. Since that time major advances in fertilizer technology have occurred whereby more energy-efficient processes and reductions in the cost of production have resulted. This edition of the *Fertilizer Manual* provides planners with information on these new advances.

Editorial Note

In the 3rd edition of the *Fertilizer Manual*, basic information from the 2nd edition has been retained. The contents of the chapters were reviewed by consultants; professionals in the given fields of agronomics, technology, and economics. The names of contributors are as follows: Chapter 1 – D. W. Rutland (IFDC); Chapter 2 – B. H. Byrnes (IFDC); Chapter 3 – W. C. Brummit (IFDC); Chapter 4 – B. L. Bumb (IFDC); Chapter 5 – S. J. Van Kauwenbergh, T.A.B. Lawendy, and J. W. Foster (IFDC); D. E. Garrett, P. Rozwadowski, and B. Groover (UNIDO); Chapters 6 and 7 – B. Groover (UNIDO); Chapter 8 – D. P. Aleinov (UNIDO); Chapter 9 – J. R. Lazo de la Vega and G. R. Coleman (IFDC); Chapter 10 – F. P. Achorn (UNIDO); Chapter 11 – P. Rozwadowski (UNIDO); Chapters 12, 13, and 14 – A. Davister (UNIDO); Chapter 15 – D. E. Garrett (UNIDO); Chapter 16 – J. J. Schultz (IFDC); Chapter 17 – J. Mortvedt and R. G. Lee (IFDC); Chapter 18 – D. W. Rutland (IFDC); Chapters 19, 20, and 22 – J. A. Kopytowski (UNIDO) (S. A. Ahmed from East West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, contributed with the EWC methodology on projection of fertilizers consumption); Chapter 21 – D. E. Nichols, J. R. Polo, and D. I. Gregory (IFDC). The technical editors of the *Fertilizer Manual* were R. G. Lee (IFDC) and J. A. Kopytowski (UNIDO). Internationally acknowledged fertilizer manufacturers, licensors, and engineering companies were asked to contribute nonconfidential information related to their processes. The following companies responded and their special contribution is appreciated and acknowledged in the *Fertilizer Manual* where needed: Babcock-King-Wilkinson, Chiyoda Corp., Lurgi GmbH, Snamprogetti SpA, M. W. Kellogg, H. Topsoe, Kemira Engineering Oy, Uhde GmbH, Stamicarbon SA, and Raytheon Engineers. Other companies' processes are described on the basis of publicly available information. Also information published by IFDC in workshop proceedings from 1990 to 1995 was used in some chapters, and references to this information are given. The information from these workshops has been especially useful in preparation of Chapters 2, 16, 19, and 21.

IFDC and UNIDO have used their best efforts in development of the information contained in the *Fertilizer Manual*. The use of the information contained herein shall be at the sole discretion of the user. It is unavoidable in a work of this magnitude that some of the information will require frequent updating. Readers should keep in mind that when authors refer to "current" or "present" situations, they usually mean 1996 unless otherwise specified.

Special thanks are extended to the following collaborators in the preparation of this manual.

- R. Rejewski (UNIDO) – preparation of the flow diagrams.
- Marie R. Stribling, Elizabeth N. Roth, and Marie K. Thompson (IFDC) – proofing and editing.
- Lynda F. Young (IFDC) – computer graphics.
- Jane L. Goss, Alicia K. Hall, Janice C. Gautney, and Donna W. Venable (IFDC) – word processing and layout.
- The contribution by Donna W. Venable is especially recognized.

Acronyms of Organizations

AAPFCO	Association of American Plant Food Control Officials
APC	Arab Potash Company
APPER	African Priority Program of Economic Recovery
BASF	Badische Anilin-und Soda-Fabrik
BFL	Beladune Fertilizers Limited
BP	British Petroleum
CERPHOS	Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches des Phosphates Mineraux
CFCA	Co-Operative Farm Chemical Association
CFL	Coromandel Fertilizers Limited
CIL	Chemetics International Ltd.
CNTIC	China National Technical Import Corporation
COFAZ	Compagnie Française de l'Azote
DSM	Dutch State Mines
EFMA	European Fertilizer Manufacturers' Association
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
EWC	East-West Center
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FERTIMEX	Fertilizantes Mexicanos
FW	Foster Wheeler
GIAP	State Institute of Nitrogen Industry
GNFC	Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilizers Company Limited
GSFC	Gujarat State Fertilizers Company, Limited
HAIL	Hydro Agri International Licensing
IAALD	International Association of Agricultural Libraries and Documentalists
ICI	Imperial Chemical Industries
IDDA	Industrial Development Decade for Africa
IFA	International Fertilizer Industry Association
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Center
IMI	Israel Mining Industry
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IMPHOS	Institut Mondial du Phosphate
IPC	International Potash Company
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KT	Koppers-Totzek
MAPCO	Mid-America Pipeline Company
OPEC	
ORNL	Oak Ridge National Laboratory
PCA	Potash Company of America
PCS	Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan
PEQUIVEN	Petroquímica de Venezuela
ROFOMEX	Roca Fosfórica Mexicana
SAI	Scottish Agricultural Industries
SQM	Sociedad Química y Minera de Chile
TEC	Toyo Engineering Company
TFI	The Fertilizer Institute
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNPAAERD	United Nations Program for Action for African Recovery and Development
USBM	U.S. Bureau of Mines
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
WHO	World Health Organization of the United Nations

Mathematical Symbols, Abbreviations and Conversion Factors Used in This Manual^a

Monetary Value

\$ U.S. dollar (unless otherwise indicated)
DM Deutsche mark

Linear Measurement

m meter = 3.28 feet (ft) = 39.37 inches (in)
cm centimeter = 0.01 meter = 0.3937 inch (in)
mm millimeter = 0.001 meter
 μ m micrometer or "micron"
km kilometer = 0.62 mile (mi)

Area Measure

m² square meter = 10.76 square feet (ft²)
cm² square centimeter = 0.155 square inch (in²)
km² square kilometer = 0.386 square mile (mi²)
ha hectare = 10,000 square meters (m²) = 2.471 acres (A)

Weight

g gram = 0.032 troy ounce (oz) = 0.035 avoirdupois ounce (oz)
mg milligram = 0.001 gram (g)
 μ g microgram = 0.000001 gram (g)
kg kilogram = 1,000 grams (g) = 2.205 pounds (lb)
t tonne (metric) = 1,000 kg = 2,205 lb = 1.102 short tons (st)
g-mole gram mole = the molecular weight of a compound multiplied by 1 gram

Volume

gal U.S. gallons = 3.785 liters
m³ cubic meter = 35.34 cubic feet (ft³) = 1,000 liters (l)
cm³ or cc cubic centimeter = 0.061 cubic inch (in³)
l liter = 0.264 U.S. gallons (gal) = 1.057 quart (qt)
bbl barrel (of petroleum) = 42 gallons (gal) = 159 liters (l)
ml milliliter = 1 cubic centimeter (cm³) approximately
Nm³ cubic meter (of gas) measured at "normal" temperature
ft³ cubic foot = 0.0283 m³

Yields or Application Rates

kg ha⁻¹ or kg/ha kilograms per hectare = 0.892 pounds per acre (lb/A)
g/ha grams per hectare

Weight Per Unit of Volume (Density)

sp gr specific gravity = the ratio of the weight of a substance to the weight of an equal volume of water at 4°C; no dimensions; numerically equal to density in g/cm³
g/cm³ grams per cubic centimeter = 62.43 pounds per cubic foot (lb/ft³)
kg/m³ kilograms per cubic meter = 0.0624 lb/ft³
t/m³ tonnes per cubic meter = g/cm³
°Bé degrees Baumé

Note: For definitions of true, apparent, and bulk densities or specific gravities, see Chapter 18.

a. Factors for converting metric units to English or SI units (Système International d'Unités) or vice versa.

Concentrations

g/l	grams per liter
mg/m ³	milligrams per cubic meter
µg/m ³	micrograms per cubic meter
ppmw	parts per million by weight
dm ³	cubic decimeter = 1 liter

Work-Energy-Heat

MMBtu	million Btu
cal	calorie = 4.184 joules (J)
kcal	kilocalorie = 1,000 cal = 3.968 British thermal units (Btu)
MMcal	million calories
kJ	kilojoule = 0.239 kcal
GJ	gigajoule = 10 ⁹ joules = 0.948 million Btu = 0.239 million kcal
Gcal	gigacalorie = 10 ⁹ calories = 3.97 million Btu
kWh	kilowatt-hour = 3,413 Btu = 36,000 joules
MWh	megawatt hours = 1,000 kWh

Power

W	watt = 1 joule per second (J/s)
kW	kilowatt = 1,000 watts (W) = 1.34 horsepower (hp)
MW	megawatt = 1,000,000 watts

Heating Value Per Unit of Volume or Weight

cal/g	calories per gram = kilocalories per kilogram (kcal/kg) = 1.8 Btu/lb = 4.187 J/g
kcal/m ³	kilocalories per cubic meter = 0.1123 Btu/ft ³

(Used to denote heating value of fuel gas; the temperature and pressure should be stated; usually 0°C and 1 atm in scientific work. The U.S. natural gas industry uses "standard conditions" of 60°F and 14.7 lb/in²).

Pressure

kg/cm ²	kilograms per square centimeter = 14.2 pounds per square inch (lb/in ²)
atm	atmosphere = 14.7 lb/in ²
atm	101.325 kilonewtons per square meter (kN/m ²) = 101.325 kilopascals (kPa)
mm Hg	millimeters of mercury = 133.3 Pa = 0.0013 atm
psia	pounds per square inch absolute
psig	pounds per square inch gauge
MPa	megapascal = 1,000 kPa
bar	0.987 atm = 100 kPa

Temperature

°C	degrees Celsius or centigrade; (°C × 1.8) + 32 = °F
°F	degrees Fahrenheit (°F - 32) 5/9 = °C
°K	absolute temperature = °C + 273

Plant Capacity or Production Rate

tpd	tonnes per day
tph	tonnes per hour
tpy	tonnes per year

Note: All tonnes are metric unless otherwise specified.

Other Abbreviations

kN/cm	.....	kilonewtons per centimeter
BL or B/L	.....	battery limits
pCi/g	.....	picocuries per gram (a measure of the concentration of a radioactive material)
f.o.b.	.....	free on board = cost at plant or port including loading on a ship or other conveyance
pH	.....	logarithm of the reciprocal of the hydrogen ion concentration in-grams per liter ($\text{pH} = \log 1/\text{H}^+ \text{ g/l}$). A solution of pH 7 is neutral; lower pHs are acidic and higher pHs are alkaline.
gpm	.....	U.S. gallons per minute
dia	.....	diameter
CRH	.....	critical relative humidity
LPG	.....	liquefied petroleum gas
LNG	.....	liquefied natural gas
SNG	.....	substitute (or synthetic) natural gas
HTS	.....	high temperature shift (catalyst)
LTS	.....	low temperature shift (catalyst)
LHV	.....	lower heating value (gas)
CEC	.....	cation exchange capacity
BPL	.....	bone phosphate of lime, 1% $\text{P}_2\text{O}_5 = 2.185\%$ BPL
BFW	.....	boiler feed water

Table of Contents

	Page
Chapter 1. General Concepts, Classification, Terminology, and Definitions	1
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Plant Nutrients	2
1.3 Fertilizer Grade	2
1.4 Nutrient Availability	3
1.5 Fertilizer Regulations	4
1.6 Fertilizer Specifications	5
1.7 Terminology and Definitions	5
1.8 Fertilizer-Related Information Sources	13
1.9 Resource Publications	18
Chapter 2. The Role of Fertilizers in Agriculture	19
2.1 Demand for Agricultural Products and Plant Nutrients	20
2.2 The Soil Resource	21
2.3 Concepts of Soil Fertility	22
2.4 Fundamentals of N, P, and K	28
2.5 Diagnosis of Nutrient Problems	37
2.6 Profitable Fertilizer Use	39
2.7 Soil Productivity and Sustainability	43
2.8 References	44
Chapter 3. Status of the Fertilizer Industry	45
3.1 Short History of Fertilizer Development	46
3.2 Statistical Overview of Fertilizer Production, 1960-95	51
3.3 Statistical Overview of Fertilizer Consumption, 1960-95	55
3.4 Trends in Fertilizer Trade	63
3.5 Trends in Fertilizer Prices	64
3.6 Emerging Centers of Fertilizer Production	65
3.7 Industry Restructuring in Older Producing Areas	66
3.8 References	69
Chapter 4. Outlook for the Fertilizer Industry, 1995-2005	70
4.1 Introduction	71
4.2 Recent Economic and Political Developments and Their Impact on the Fertilizer Industry	72
4.3 Future Outlook for Fertilizer Demand	72
4.4 Future Outlook for Fertilizer Supply	75
4.5 Fertilizer Supply-Demand Balances	78
4.6 Summary	80
4.7 Price Outlook	81
4.8 References	82
Chapter 5. Fertilizer Raw Materials and Reserves	83
5.1 Availability and Sources of Raw Materials	85
5.2 Nitrogen Feedstocks	85
5.3 Phosphate Rock	90
5.4 Sulfur	126
5.5 Potash	131
5.6 References	152

Chapter 6. Production of Ammonia	158
6.1 Ammonia Early Process Development	159
6.2 Physical Properties of Ammonia	160
6.3 Feedstock for Ammonia Production	160
6.4 Production Technology of Ammonia	164
6.5 Partial Oxidation Process of Heavy Hydrocarbons	182
6.6 Ammonia From Coal	184
6.7 Ammonia From Electrolytic Hydrogen	187
6.8 Economics of Ammonia Production	188
6.9 Future Development of Ammonia Technology	191
6.10 References	192
Chapter 7. Transportation and Storage of Ammonia	195
7.1 Introduction	196
7.2 Ammonia Storage	197
7.3 Transportation of Ammonia	199
7.4 References	206
Chapter 8. Nitric Acid, Nitrates, and Ammonium Salts	207
8.1 Introduction	209
8.2 Nitric Acid	209
8.3 Ammonium Nitrate	220
8.4 Pollution Control	236
8.5 Production of Calcium Ammonium Nitrate	236
8.6 Other Nitrogen Compounds Used as Fertilizers	238
8.7 References	253
Chapter 9. Urea	256
9.1 Introduction	257
9.2 Properties of Urea	258
9.3 Process Operating Variables	258
9.4 Urea Processes	259
9.5 Urea Finishing Processes	266
9.6 Economics	268
9.7 References	268
Chapter 10. Liquid Fertilizers and Nitrogen Solutions	271
10.1 Introduction	272
10.2 Nitrogen	274
10.3 Fluid Phosphates	279
10.4 Suspension Fertilizers	283
10.5 Specialty Fluid Fertilizers	289
10.6 Investment Costs	292
10.7 Summary	293
10.8 References	293
Chapter 11. Sulfuric and Phosphoric Acids	295
11.1 Sulfuric Acid	296
11.2 Wet-Process Phosphoric Acid	311
11.3 Superphosphoric Acid	332
11.4 Shipment of Phosphoric Acid	333
11.5 Use of Byproduct Gypsum	336
11.6 Utilization of Fluorine	339
11.7 Uranium Extraction	340
11.8 Purification of Phosphoric Acid	341
11.9 Production of Phosphoric Acid Using Acids Other Than Sulfuric	345
11.10 Phosphoric Acid Production by the Electric Furnace Process	348
11.11 Phosphoric Acid Production by the Blast-Furnace Process	350
11.12 Wet-Process Licensers	351
11.13 References	351

Chapter 12. Fertilizers Derived From Phosphoric Acid	354
12.1 Introduction	355
12.2 Triple Superphosphate	355
12.3 Ammonium Phosphates	361
12.4 Nongranular MAP	370
12.5 Ammonium Polyphosphate	373
12.6 Comparative Economics of TSP and DAP	374
12.7 Other Fertilizers Made From Phosphoric Acid	376
12.8 Process Licensors and Contractors	381
12.9 References	381
Chapter 13. Nitrophosphate Fertilizers	384
13.1 Introduction	385
13.2 Fundamentals of Nitrophosphates	385
13.3 Nitrophosphate Processes	386
13.4 Odda Process With Calcium Precipitation	387
13.5 The Mixed-Acid Process	392
13.6 Other Processes	395
13.7 Advantages and Disadvantages of the Nitrophosphate Route	397
13.8 Development in Quantities and Market Share	398
13.9 References	398
Chapter 14. Other Phosphate Fertilizers	400
14.1 Single Superphosphate (SSP)	401
14.2 Phosphate Rock as a Fertilizer	405
14.3 Basic Slag	408
14.4 Potassium Phosphates	409
14.5 Bone Meal	410
14.6 Fused Calcium Magnesium Phosphate	410
14.7 Rhenania Phosphate	410
14.8 Calcium Metaphosphate	411
14.9 Dicalcium Phosphate	411
14.10 Magnesium Phosphates	412
14.11 Urea Superphosphate (USP)	412
14.12 References	414
Chapter 15. Potash Fertilizers	416
15.1 Introduction	417
15.2 Potash in Agriculture	417
15.3 Potash Production, Consumption, and Price	418
15.4 Product Quality	420
15.5 Other Potassium Fertilizers	424
15.6 Chemical-Grade Potash	430
15.7 References	431
Chapter 16. Compound Fertilizers	432
16.1 Introduction	433
16.2 Trends in Supply and Demand for Compound Fertilizers	433
16.3 Role of Compound Fertilizers	433
16.4 Compound Fertilizer Production Technology	434
16.5 Physical and Chemical Parameters for Producing Agglomerated NPKs	435
16.6 Processes for Manufacturing Compound Fertilizers	441
16.7 Unique Requirements for Manufacturing Urea-Based Granular Compound Fertilizers	447
16.8 Investment and Operating Costs	451
16.9 References	454

Chapter 17. Secondary Nutrients and Micronutrients	456
17.1 Secondary Nutrients	457
17.2 Micronutrients	460
17.3 Preparation of Fertilizers Containing Micronutrients	462
17.4 Other Useful Elements	467
17.5 Acknowledgment	468
17.6 References	468
Chapter 18. Physical Properties of Fertilizers	470
18.1 Introduction	471
18.2 Physical Properties of Solid Fertilizers	471
18.3 Physical Properties of Fluid Fertilizers	494
18.4 References	499
Chapter 19. Environmental Protection and Pollution Prevention	506
19.1 Introduction	507
19.2 Environmental Issues Related to the Use of Fertilizers	508
19.3 Environmental Impact of the Fertilizer Industry	512
19.4 Phosphogypsum	535
19.5 Environmental Impact Assessment	537
19.6 The Role of International Organizations	540
19.7 Best Available Technology (BAT)	540
19.8 ISO 14000	542
19.9 References	543
Chapter 20. Planning for the Development of a Fertilizer Industry	545
20.1 Introduction	546
20.2 Strategies and Policies of Fertilizer Industry Development	547
20.3 Estimates of Demand and Requirements	549
20.4 Establishment and Development of the Fertilizer Industry	558
20.5 Paving the Way to Plant Operation	564
20.6 References	567
Chapter 21. Economics of Fertilizer Manufacture	568
21.1 Introduction	569
21.2 The Structure of Investment Costs	570
21.3 The Structure of Production Costs	575
21.4 Financial Analysis	577
21.5 Economic Analysis Structure	584
21.6 Use of Computers for Financial Economic Analysis	586
21.7 Guidelines for Achieving Well-Established Projects	586
21.8 References	600
Chapter 22. Challenges Facing the Fertilizer Industry	601
22.1 Introduction	602
22.2 Resolution of Macroeconomic Contradictions	602
22.3 Fertilizer Production Capacity and Demand	603
22.4 Transformation From Public to Private	604
22.5 Establishment of New Facilities	605
22.6 Potential for Reducing Fertilizer Costs	607
22.7 General Conclusions	608
22.8 References	609

Chapter 1. General Concepts, Classification, Terminology, and Definitions

Table of Contents

	Page
1.1 Introduction	2
1.2 Plant Nutrients	2
1.2.1 Classification	2
1.2.2 Expression	2
1.3 Fertilizer Grade	2
1.4 Nutrient Availability	3
1.5 Fertilizer Regulations	4
1.6 Fertilizer Specifications	5
1.7 Terminology and Definitions	5
1.8 Fertilizer-Related Information Sources	13
1.9 Resource Publications	18

Chapter 1. General Concepts, Classification, Terminology, and Definitions

1.1 Introduction

A fertilizer is a material that furnishes one or more of the chemical elements necessary for the proper development and growth of plants. The most important fertilizers are fertilizer products (also called chemical or mineral fertilizers), manures, and plant residues. A fertilizer product is a material produced by industrial processes with the specific purpose of being used as a fertilizer. Fertilizers are essential in today's agricultural system to replace the elements extracted from the soil in the form of food and other agricultural products.

1.2 Plant Nutrients

Chemical elements that are essential for the proper development and growth of plants are typically referred to as plant nutrients. The list of plant nutrients recognized as being necessary for plant growth has increased over the years and now totals sixteen, as shown in Table 1.1.

1.2.1 Classification

Nine plant nutrients are required in relatively large amounts and are referred to as major elements or macronutrients. Of these, carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen are obtained from the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and water and therefore are not dealt with as nutrients by the fertilizer industry. These three plant nutrients make up 90%-95% of the dry matter of all plants. The other major elements are subdivided into primary nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium) and secondary nutrients (calcium, magnesium, and sulfur). The remaining seven plant nutrients are required in much smaller amounts and are known as micronutrients or minor elements.

In addition to the 16 essential elements listed in Table 1.1, some other elements have been shown, in certain circumstances, to be helpful in increasing crop yields or in improving the value of crops for animal or human nutrition. Examples are sodium, silicon, cobalt, and vanadium.

1.2.2 Expression

Many countries express quantities or percentages of the primary nutrients in terms of elemental nitrogen (N), phosphorus pentoxide (P_2O_5), and potassium oxide

Table 1.1. Classification of Elements Essential for Plant Growth

Major elements (macronutrients)	(Available from air or water)	Carbon Hydrogen Oxygen
	Primary nutrients	Nitrogen Phosphorus Potassium
	Secondary nutrients	Calcium Magnesium Sulfur
Minor elements (micronutrients)		Boron Chlorine Copper Iron Manganese Molybdenum Zinc

(K_2O). Secondary nutrients and micronutrients usually are expressed on an elemental basis although calcium and magnesium sometimes are expressed in the oxide form. However, several countries express all plant nutrients on an elemental basis. Plants actually use neither the pure element nor the pure oxide form, so the difference is largely academic. Conversion factors for those plant nutrients that may be expressed in the elemental or oxide form, depending on the country, are shown in Table 1.2.

1.3 Fertilizer Grade

It is customary to refer to a given fertilizer product by a series of numbers separated by dashes. This set of numbers is called the "grade" of the fertilizer product. Each of the numbers indicates the amount of a nutrient that the manufacturer guarantees is contained in the fertilizer product. This number includes only the amount of nutrient found by prescribed analytical procedures, thereby excluding any nutrient present in a form that is deemed to be unavailable for plant nutrition. The content of each nutrient is always expressed as a percentage by

Table 1.2. Conversion Factors of Plant Nutrients (From Oxide to Elemental and From Elemental to Oxide Form)

P ₂ O ₅	x	0.44	=	P
P	x	2.29	=	P ₂ O ₅
K ₂ O	x	0.83	=	K
K	x	1.20	=	K ₂ O
CaO	x	0.71	=	Ca
Ca	x	1.40	=	CaO
MgO	x	0.60	=	Mg
Mg	x	1.66	=	MgO
SO ₃	x	0.40	=	S
S	x	2.50	=	SO ₃

weight, or in other words as kilograms of nutrient per 100 kg of the fertilizer product. These percentages are guaranteed minimum rather than actual content, which is usually slightly higher.

Usually, three numbers are used when giving the grade of a fertilizer product, and these three numbers always refer, in order, to the content of the primary nutrients: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. If other nutrients are present, their content can also be indicated in the grade of the fertilizer product; each extra number is followed by the chemical symbol of the nutrient it represents. Many countries indicate the content of phosphorus and potassium not in the elemental form but in the oxide form, P₂O₅ and K₂O. When references are made to the phosphorus content of a fertilizer product, it is common to call it phosphate, which is the form in which it is mostly present within the fertilizer products, although all calculations and expressions of content are made using either the oxide form (P₂O₅) or the elemental form (P).

Some examples of fertilizer grades follow:

- A fertilizer product with a grade of 18-46-0 is guaranteed by the manufacturer to have the following content:
18% N, or 18 kg of N in every 100 kg
46% P₂O₅, or 46 kg of P₂O₅ in every 100 kg
0% K₂O, or no K₂O
- A fertilizer product with a grade of 12-6-22-2MgO is guaranteed by the manufacturer to contain:
12% N, or 12 kg of N in every 100 kg
6% P₂O₅, or 6 kg of P₂O₅ in every 100 kg
22% K₂O, or 22 kg of K₂O in every 100 kg
2% MgO, or 2 kg of MgO in every 100 kg

Expressed on an elemental basis, the fertilizer grade of this product would be 12-2.6-18.3-1.2Mg (Table 1.2).

In this manual, the oxide form will be used unless otherwise specified.

The value of using fertilizer grades in identifying a fertilizer product cannot be overemphasized. This is a constant reminder to the consumer that he is purchasing plant nutrients, not a named fertilizer product. For example, the fertilizer product single superphosphate (SSP) is known worldwide by that name or acronym. However, the P₂O₅ content in commercially available SSP products around the world ranges from 14% to 20%.

1.4 Nutrient Availability

A commercial fertilizer is a material containing at least one of the plant nutrients in a form assimilable or "available" to plants in known amounts. Generally, a plant nutrient is taken up by plant roots or foliage in the form of a solution in water. Plant nutrients form many different chemical compounds having varying degrees of solubility in water. Thus, it would seem that water solubility should provide a simple conclusive measure of the availability to plants. Unfortunately, the situation is far too complex for water solubility alone to serve as a measure of availability. All materials are soluble in water to some extent, even the most "insoluble."

Many sparingly soluble materials have been found to be available to plants and, in some cases, even more effective than readily water-soluble materials. However, some materials are so insoluble as to be virtually worthless as fertilizers. Therefore, most countries specify some degree of solubility of the nutrient content in water or other reagents or alternatively require identification and approval of the source of the material.

For example, natural organic materials may be acceptable on the basis of total N, P₂O₅, and K₂O content, provided the source of the material is identified and approved. Synthetic organic materials, if sparingly soluble, may require special methods of analysis, particularly if intended for controlled-release fertilizers. Likewise, special tests may be required for coated controlled-release fertilizers.

Because most common nitrogen and potassium fertilizers are readily water-soluble, water solubility usually is accepted as evidence of plant availability, and special methods are applied to less soluble materials only when there is some evidence to indicate that the low (or controlled) solubility may be advantageous.

In the case of phosphate fertilizers, there is a wide variety of both readily water-soluble materials and