

What The SCWMC Has Taught Me

Before the construction and production of the Intensive Livestock Operations (ILOs) in the Rama area, opposition to the development was very intense. Much of this opposition was based on false and misleading information, the true value that the SCWMC has succeeded in doing was to squelch this false information and replace it with actual concrete scientific results obtained from the region.

I have been involved from inception on the soils monitoring and research project. This entailed the collection of soil samples from 8 designated fields prior to any ILO production and injection of liquid manure from the barns onto the surrounding cultivated fields; and now after every 3rd crop. Sampling began in the fall of 2000, and the soils research project will continue until 2012. The scope of the soils research project is second to none in the world, sample sizes are the total quarter section (160 acres) that the local farmers seed annually.

Our results have been extremely encouraging and beneficial not only to the ILO industry but also to the Province of Saskatchewan and the local Rama area. Our results show that all the nutrients in the liquid manure are used up by the plants after the second crop has been harvested (see our 5 Year Report). While we were conducting and collecting this research, we also were involved with a “crop yield comparison” between commercially fertilized crops and the liquid manure fertilized crops. Our results showed an actual yield increase of 9% to 20% on the crops that received the liquid manure fertilizer. In addition, the health of the soil composition has increased on the manure fields.

The use of liquid manure from the hog barns as a crop fertilizer, originally seen and promoted by opponents to the ILO development as a source of pollutants and contaminants to the environment, is now in tremendous demand by the local grain producers. Why? The answer is very simple – the liquid manure fertilizer is as good or better than commercial fertilizer, it is far less expensive and the application of the liquid manure is carried out by qualified ILO staff saving the farmer time, effort and money.

This tremendously beneficial industry is now starting to experience a problem that we never anticipated, due to supply and demand. The demand for the liquid manure as a fertilizer by the local grain producers is now far greater than the physical supply that is produced by the ILO industry resulting in a situation of competition.

Presently, there is a very popular television program called ‘Mythbusters’ where old false myths are laid to rest by the application of true facts, and that is exactly what we have seen take place here with the SCWMC’s monitoring and research projects. The ILO industry is not your enemy, it is your friend if managed and used in a very sustainable way.

Don Olson
Soils Committee Chairperson