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News you can use from USI

United Soils strives to provide our customers with the most accurate soil testing practices and technologies. In order to provide you with the most accurate data, we rely on the help of outside sources. Recently, the University of Illinois has released their 24th Edition of the Illinois Agronomy Handbook and we would like to highlight some of their research for you.

There is some information in the new handbook that can help clarify some conflicting messages with soil testing that have been communicated to the Ag industry through private labs.

The information we would like to bring to your attention are the comments in the new agronomy handbook concerning the different tests for phosphorus. If you go to page 94 and read the comments under phosphorus you will see what has been printed is the same thing we have been trying to educate our customers on for the past several years. Most labs have tried to say they have conversion from ICP analysis to colorimetric values. This would be true if the over estimation of phosphorus was a constant % of overestimation, however, it is not. The ICP values can range from 20-100% above the colorimetric value. What we have noticed is the overestimation is generally the greatest at lower testing levels of plant available phosphorus.

Here is an excerpt from Iowa State University Extension (PM 1688 02).

Phosphorus Soil Test (lbs/acre)					
Soil Test Category:	Very Low	Low	Optimum	High	Very High
Bray P1 and Mehlich-3 P:					
Low Subsoil P	0-16	18-30	32-40	42-60	62+
High Subsoil P	0-10	12-20	22-30	32-40	42+
Mehlich-3 ICP:					
Low Subsoil P	0-30	32-50	52-70	72-90	92+
High Subsoil P	0-20	22-40	42-60	62-80	82+

*This chart compares the P soil test results of both Mehlich-3 Colorimetric and ICP. The amounts shown in the optimum category are based on 150 bu/acre corn yields.

If your lab is running an ICP are they using a conversion to make their phosphorus results look like the colorimetric numbers? In order to make proper fertilizer prescriptions we really need soil test results that have been proven through field research to provide values that will most likely increase your profitability as a grower. It is essential to accurately define how P was measured in soil samples to avoid misinterpretations or inappropriate recommendations.

At United Soils a job well done is better than well said.