

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GROWMARK Agronomy Introduces Sustainability Programs

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. (March 1, 2016) – GROWMARK is launching new programs out of its Agronomy division as part of its System-wide Sustainability Initiative called *Endure*. The programs include a Pollinator Seed Program, Endure Advocate Program, and entry-level and advanced nutrient management training programs.

Pollinator Seed Program

As part of its pollinator program, GROWMARK is donating seed to many of its supply and grain members to plant a wildflower mix that supports pollinator populations, including honeybees. The Green Yard™ Honey Bee Wildflower Mix will help promote honey bee health by providing an environment to thrive during a time when populations are in decline. FS and grain members will plant the flowers this spring, providing over 70 habitats across more than 25 acres.

In addition, 24 GROWMARK employees are also planting pollinator habitats as part of the program. Each employee is receiving one pound of seed. Various 4-H clubs are taking part too. Clubs will secure a public location, plant, and tend to a mix of wildflowers selected to attract pollinator species.

Lance Ruppert, GROWMARK Director, Agronomy Marketing, said the pollinator program is just one example of activities throughout the GROWMARK System that showcase sustainable practices. “The number of companies and employees participating in this program are a testament to our commitment to sustainable practices. The addition of more than 100 total habitats across a wide geography will provide additional opportunities for pollinator species to assist in our robust food production system.”

Endure Advocate Program

In the new Endure Advocate Program, GROWMARK will recognize up to five FS crop specialists who engage growers in sustainable best management farming practices. FS member companies nominate employees who demonstrate ability in: Utilizing the 4R (right source, right rate, right time, right place) approach of nutrient stewardship, assisting growers with fertilizer management, implementing nitrogen monitoring programs like N-WATCH, and more. “Environmental stewardship is extremely important to all of us,” said Ruppert. “We continue to put a major focus on nutrient management under our Endure Sustainability Initiative. The Endure Advocate Program is recognizing those employees who help us maintain a high standard of excellence in application and best management practices.” he added. Recognition will be made at the GROWMARK annual meeting in August.

Nutrient Management Specialist Training Program

GROWMARK is providing advanced training with its Nutrient Management Specialist Program. Designed to help develop nitrogen management experts and nutrient management trainers within the System, the advanced specialists will help identify nutrient management issues, assist with local nutrient management outreach, train other crop specialists on nutrient management planning, and write reviews for N-WATCH. "This advanced and specialized training will help our members work with farmers and other crop specialists to maximize nitrogen utilization," said Dr. Howard Brown, GROWMARK's Director of Nutrient Management and Environmental Stewardship. "It is our goal to improve nutrient stewardship through maximizing input utilization and optimizing harvest yields" Brown added.

GROWMARK's *Endure* sustainability initiative is a System-wide effort designed to highlight the products and practices that endure over time, ensuring ongoing viability for the company, its owners and customers, while developing programs that help the environment and greater good.

About GROWMARK:

GROWMARK is a regional cooperative with annual sales of \$8.8 billion (FY 2015 data) providing agronomy, energy, facility planning, and logistics products and services, as well as grain marketing and risk management services in more than 40 states and Ontario, Canada. GROWMARK owns the FS trademark, which is used by affiliated member cooperatives. More information is available at www.growmark.com and www.fssystem.com.

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