

Variable Rate Technology (VRT)... NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AT ITS BEST

Affirming our Company's commitment to innovation and sustainable agriculture, Viterra has recently launched a Variable Rate Technology program designed to help farmers make strategic use of fertilizers to optimize results. The program aims to help farmers cut operating costs, increase yields, and minimize environmental impacts, all at the same time. With several unique features and innovations, Viterra's Variable Rate Technology program is unlike any other in the North American market today.



The right prescription for your field

As with other VRT programs, Viterra's program employs satellite imagery and soil tests to prepare prescription application plans. Variable rate technologies that tie GPS information and application equipment together are then used to vary the rate of fertilizer applied to the field, resulting in the strategic placement of nutrients.

Viterra's VRT Manager Thom Weir, a Certified Crop Advisor with over 30 years of experience working in the agricultural industry, explains that the VRT program enables farmers to hone in on the "right rate" of application—not just on each field, but on each management zone. "Rather than putting the right rate on the entire field," Weir notes, "we zoom in and put the right rate on each of these management zones. Essentially, producers are able to manage these zones as if they are their own unique field."

Increased efficiencies = Economic benefits

The increased efficiencies that result from VRT lead to economic benefits for farmers. Most farmers will see improved yields and quality from applying the same amount of nitrogen across the fields. In other instances, producers may be able to reduce the overall applications and not see a reduction in their yields.

Unique program features

Following the principle that "what is best for the farmer is best for Viterra," the VRT team carefully developed the program with its customers in mind. Dr. Rigas Karamanos, Viterra's Agronomy Manager, proposes that although other companies offer VRT programs, Viterra's program has three important differences: "When we were planning the program, we said, 'let's do it in a way

that is scientifically correct, that is more transparent, and that is also cost-efficient and effective.”

It is not surprising that Dr. Karamanos, a distinguished scientist with a research career spanning more than four decades and the former manager of the Saskatchewan Soil Testing laboratory, would want to base the program on information that is scientifically sound.

To ensure that the VRT program actually does produce higher yields and economic returns for producers, his team has adopted the delta yield concept, the scientific gold standard for determining yields. Dr. Karamanos recognizes that Viterra’s science-based approach adds to Viterra’s credibility and assures customers that when they adopt a new technology, it will deliver the results they expect.

The cost-efficiency of Viterra’s VRT program comes from using AgroMax-VST, an integrated nutrient planner unique to Viterra developed by Karamanos himself. The AgroMax-VST cuts producers’ costs by allowing Viterra’s technicians to come up with the next year’s soil test without actually going out to the field. After performing a traditional soil test the first year that a producer joins the program, the VRT team uses the growing season’s data and characteristics to calculate the soil test for the following year. The VST is scientifically-proven and accurate.

Finally, Viterra’s VRT program aims to be transparent. To make the program accessible to our farmer customers, Viterra has teamed up with SST Systems, the largest software provider of VRT in the United States, to gain access to the SST FarmRite platform. Unlike other VRT programs that might supply farmers with a prescription map without explaining how the map is derived or letting producers see the data, Viterra’s farm customers will be able to access their records through SST Software. “We want to be transparent,” Karamanos states, “and we want the farmer to be able to view and understand the data and the maps.”

Viterra’s VRT program offers benefits to producers that not every VRT program can match. It’s a program that everyone at Viterra is really excited about because it offers significant incentives to farmers while also producing an environmental benefit. Karamanos explains, “when we apply Variable Rate Technology, we make efficient use of nutrients, improve production, improve the economic viability for the farmer, improve food security, and also encourage good environmental stewardship of the land. It’s a situation where everybody benefits. We hope that farmers will take advantage of the program”.

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