

REVOLUTIONIZING CONSERVATION DELIVERY

United Suppliers is leading the way toward private sector planning

Sustainability and water management are current themes in agriculture that continue to grow in importance, both at the grower and retailer levels. In Iowa, the Nutrient Strategy outlines the need for reductions in the amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus discharged into Iowa's rivers and streams. Everywhere there is a call to produce food, feed, fiber and fuel in an increasingly sustainable manner.

United Suppliers, headquartered in Ames, IA, is a major cooperative distributor of agricultural products across the U.S. and Canada. They have recognized this need and have committed themselves to exploring innovative ways to help their owners and growers succeed and differentiate themselves from the competition.

*"A sustainable agriculture does not deplete soils or people."
-- Wendell Berry*

In September 2014, United Suppliers (USI) launched Sustain™. The Sustain mission is to offer a leading-edge, economically sound, forward-thinking pathway through which USI owners can meet the demands of the supply chain for fertilizer optimization and soil health, and do so in ways that deliver significant agronomic benefits for growers as well as significant environmental benefits to the community. Soil conservation is one of three foundational strategies of the USI Sustain program.

SOIL VANTAGE™ Branded as SoilVantage™, USI offers Agren's precision conservation technology through a back-office service for soil conservation planning. United Suppliers' owners/retailers work with growers to identify resource concerns in the field and refer these concerns to a centralized staff for conservation planning assistance. The USI planner then works through the local agronomist or with the grower directly, often via telephone and webinar, to evaluate soil loss and/or plan soil loss control practices. This arrangement leverages the field agronomist's relationship with the farmer but doesn't burden the agronomist with the added responsibility of being an expert in soil and water management. Retailers participating in the Sustain program become authorized by sending their field agronomists to a two-day training, which provides background on the basics of soil and water management and prepares agronomists for soil and water management discussions with their growers.

By equipping USI with precision technologies for creating and evaluating soil and water management solutions, a door opened to an entirely new service offering. "The new conservation planning service will provide growers assistance in exploring conservation alternatives that best meet their needs," said United Suppliers President & CEO Brad Oelmann. "Agren's software allows us to

provide precision ag data-layers for soil loss and steepness that are unmatched by any other program." We can now offer practical, value-added soil and water management solutions, empowering farmers and land managers to make profitable decisions that ultimately enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability. And, the system provides outcomes that are both science-based and transparent.



"Sustainability in the supply chain is not a fad." Matt Carstens, United Suppliers Vice President

"We're getting the message loud and clear that sustainability in the supply chain is not a fad," says Matt Carstens, United Suppliers vice president. "The sooner we ramp up, the sooner we'll be able to help producers respond to rapid changes in the supply chain."

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P: 712.792.6248

W: www.agrentools.com