



PEI Analytical Laboratories  
Soil Testing

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## The Benefits of Soil Testing

Over the past five decades, the practice and use of soil testing has become widely accepted in agribusiness both by farmers and industry. The potential for increased yields and profits has been the obvious motivator for the keen interest in soil testing.

Soil test reports will generally provide you with appropriate fertilizer application recommendations for nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and limestone. Soil testing also allows for determining the micronutrient requirements of your crop. If you apply too little fertilizer, your crop yields and returns will be lower. Too much fertilizer will waste time and money and risk environmental damage due to nutrient runoff. Consequently, soil testing provides a farm management tool with a potential benefit to the farmer of increased yields, reduced operating costs and superior environmental risk management. Additional benefits include; improved crop maturity and quality, higher tolerance to disease and pest damage, and increased growth.

Limestone applications are of particular importance on PEI's acid soils. Soil testing is the best way to obtain a good estimate of the limestone applications required for a crop. Plant tissue testing can also be a useful nutrient management tool, however it tends to be a "postmortem" type of test and is generally of more value in predicting the requirements of the next season's crop. Soil testing done in the spring or fall before a crop is to be grown, makes it the best indicator of fertilizer requirements for that crop season.

Many millions of dollars are spent each year on fertilizers and limestone on PEI. The cost of soil testing is relatively inexpensive in comparison to the costs of the fertilizer.

For further information contact a Nutrient Management specialist with the P.E.I. Department of Agriculture and Forestry at (902) 316-1600.

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