Dealer Anthony Zilar of Kennewick, Wash. started using AGGRAND products experimentally in 2008. By 2012, he committed to using AGGRAND products for his expanding farm operations and realized higher yield, lower costs and better quality in his wheat harvest.

In 2008, Zilar was a part-time farmer and rancher looking for cost-effective ways to achieve high yields and quality results for various crops. He found AGGRAND products on the Internet.

"My experience with AGGRAND products supported a foliar application in the spring would likely supplement an emerging crop successfully."

"I was intrigued by testimonials claiming higher yields and lower costs," Zilar said. "Of course, the science of AGGRAND products also was very refreshing."

He describes himself as naturally skeptical. "I decided to conduct my own field trials," Zilar said. He built a boom sprayer and modified his sprayer system to maximize the efficiency in the application of the AGGRAND products. (His boom sprayer project was the focus of an earlier AGGRAND News article.)

His initial AGGRAND application was on pastures and small 5-10-acre irrigated and dry-land hay fields. "I was achieving success and wanted to know more," Zilar said.

He attended AMSOIL University in 2009, where he toured the AGGRAND production facility and learned more about the products from AGGRAND staff.

"It was a fantastic experience," Zilar said. "I used the information I learned and continued to collect data from my own field trials. I enjoyed my success as a part-time farmer."

‘Full Commitment to AGGRAND Fertilizers’

He became a full-time farmer in late 2012, when the farming lease on his family’s property was up. He wanted to bring 185 irrigated acres back into alfalfa hay production. The previous leased crop had been potatoes. "I felt the best way to transition to alfalfa was to plant a rotation of hard red winter wheat (HRW) to maximize on soil preparation for a successful alfalfa crop the following year," Zilar said.

He hired a crop consultant to advise him on wheat production. The consultant determined standard fertilizing practices would come at a cost of about $190 an acre. "That was not acceptable to me," Zilar said. "So I used my knowledge and experience with AGGRAND products to formulate an alternative plan. It was time to make a full commitment to growing crops with AGGRAND fertilizers."

Trusting AGGRAND Experience for Spring

In the fall of 2012, Zilar completed tillage of the crop fields. "My baseline soil analysis revealed there were likely enough nutrients in the soil to get a wheat stand through the winter," he said. "My experience with AGGRAND products supported a foliar application in the spring would likely supplement an emerging crop successfully. So I took a gamble and opted not to provide a ground application of fertilizer prior to planting."

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Over the course of a growing season, we are beset with a variety of recurring questions. In this issue, we’ll answer some of those more commonly asked questions not addressed in the Frequently Asked Questions section of our website.

Q: Are AGGRAND fertilizers safe to use around children, pets and grazing animals?

A: Yes. AGGRAND products are all-natural, biodegradable and non-toxic. AGGRAND Natural Fertilizer has earned certification as 100 percent USDA bio-based. That means it is officially from 100 percent natural sources and registered with USDA as among the products of choice for contractors trying to reduce their environmental footprint. All AGGRAND products are non-toxic when applied per AGGRAND recommendations, and there is no re-entry time stipulation for humans or animals. AGGRAND Dealers can access the product Material Safety Data Sheet at: www.aggrand.com/LearningCenter/ProductInfo/msds.aspx

Q: Can AGGRAND products be tank-mixed with pesticides and/or herbicides for field applications?

A: This question often arises upon the completion of a soil recommendation. Based on the number of times I’ve been asked, and the fact that I’ve never had any reports of incompatibility, AGGRAND Natural Fertilizer 4-3-3 in its dilute form is compatible with most tank-mixable pesticides and herbicides. Whenever there is some doubt, as when using other AGGRAND products, we always recommend the “jar test.” For this test, the products to be tank-mixed are blended in small amounts at the appropriate dilution rates and mixed in a jar, where any chemical reaction that would interfere with a good application will become apparent.

Q: Is AGGRAND Natural Fertilizer still a 4-3-3 after it’s diluted with water?

A: All fertilizer product labels must state the percentage by weight of the major nutrients as packaged. Once any fertilizer is mixed with water or applied to the field neat and dissolved by rain or irrigation, only a fraction of those nutrients are available to the plants at a given time. With AGGRAND, though, all of the nutrients that have been applied are available immediately, not sitting there waiting for the next rainfall.

To learn more about the benefits of working with AGGRAND, contact 715-399-6419 or by email at info@aggrand.com.
Zilar planted 100 pounds per acre of Whetstone variety HRW wheat in early November. “By April 2013, my wheat crop was fully emerged and tillering,” he said. “However, comparison with other wheat stands in the area indicated my crop was a bit behind in growth; likely because of depleted nutrients from my decision not to do a ground application of fertilizer prior to planting.”

He responded with a direct application of AGGRAND Liquid Lime (a half gallon/acre) and AGGRAND Natural Kelp and Sulphate of Potash (a half gallon/acre) mixed with some weed abatement products.

Zilar reasoned the AGGRAND products would provide the calcium, sulfur and potassium to enhance root growth and nutrient uptake to give the young crop a strong foundation for prolific development. “The wheat crop response was exceptional,” he said.

A week later, he applied a half-gallon per acre of AGGRAND Natural Fertilizer through his irrigation system. The product was easy and efficient to apply, and the wheat stand developed quicker and more hardily than most of the other fields in his area, he said. After that, he occasionally supplemented the wheat stand by injecting a quart per acre of AGGRAND Natural Fertilizer.

“At late flag stage, just before the wheat went to the boot, I included a quart per acre of AGGRAND Natural Liquid Bonemeal with some AGGRAND Natural Fertilizer to promote large wheat head development,” Zilar said. “When the wheat went to bloom, I injected a final dose of a quart per acre of AGGRAND Natural Fertilizer to help maximize the number of grains per head of wheat.”

Growing Season Sees Frost, Wind, Heat

The weather was a challenge during the season, with the region experiencing late frosts and early-summer high temperatures, Zilar said. Occasional, unusually strong winds in June resulted in lodging on many wheat fields.

“Fortunately, my wheat stand had minimal damage from the frost, heat or wind,” he said. “I attributed the health of my stand and resistance to negative elements to the use of AGGRAND products.”

Other local wheat stands grown with expensive commercial fertilizer products, garnered yields between 110 and 135 bushels of wheat per acre.

“Many of those farmers took a hit when selling their grain because they had trouble making the standard protein values of 11.5 percent,” Zilar said. “I yielded 140 bushels of wheat per acre with protein values of 12 percent, exceeding the market standards. My fertilizer costs were $55 per acre, about one quarter of the costs of other wheat crops.

Zilar realized higher yields, better quality and lower costs. He continued his assessment of AGGRAND products when he prepared his fields for the next planting.

Soil Analysis Proves AGGRAND Effectiveness

“Yes, I had a great, high-quality yield,” Zilar said. “But I knew for every pound of product I took from my soil, I depleted its vital nutrients. Depletion of nutrients meant less soil fertility for future crops and higher costs for soil recovery. So the real test of AGGRAND product effectiveness was determining how much nutrient depletion resulted from yielding over 6 tons of grain and straw per acre from my soils.”

The preparation for a fall alfalfa planting included tilling, soil sampling and nutrient supplementing, an often expensive and time-consuming process, Zilar said.

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AGGRAND application rates and experiences featured here have been submitted by sources independent of AGGRAND. Individual experiences may vary. Optimal application rates can vary due to soil condition, crop type, weather patterns and many other factors. AGGRAND recommends and supports soil analysis to determine optimal application rates.
Fall Planting Shows Signs of Success

Tilling includes turning under as much organic matter as possible from the previous crop. This promotes good soil microbiology and prevents the organic matter from fouling the seeding equipment. “Pulling tillage across a field consumes much fuel and adds to overall costs,” Zilar said. “In order to decrease the number of tractor passes required to work the organic matter into the soil, I opted to burn the excess straw on my fields to decrease the amount of straw on the surface. This was a gamble because vital nutrients are often lost from the soil as the heat of the fire draws the moisture from the ground.”

A soil sample analysis after burning the soil proved the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium remaining in the soil was comparable to the baseline soil samples taken prior to the initial wheat planting. The only notable depletion from the soil was sulfur content. “This was an inexpensive fix when compared to the costs of soil supplements required by the other farmers who opted to use more traditional means to bring their soils back to par,” Zilar said.

In September 2013, Zilar planted alfalfa. “By first frost, I had full emergence and a great start on what is expected to be a healthy, profitable crop,” he said. “I look forward to continued success and cost saving with the use of AGGRAND products.”