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Industry Teamwork Fosters Safer Employees and Communities

Otherwise competitors, ag retailers unite to benefit local communities, employees and the industry through ResponsibleAg.

Often, ag inputs companies don't have much of a reason to proactively join forces. Each is busy operating its business to serve local producers. However, by setting aside their competitive natures and working together through ResponsibleAg, fertilizer manufacturers, wholesalers and ag retail businesses can better their operations and the entire industry.

"We are a bunch of competitors trying to grow our businesses. ResponsibleAg is a way for us to come together as a self-regulated community, for the betterment of the industry as a whole," says Tim McArdle, Chairman of the ResponsibleAg board and Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Brandt Consolidated, Inc.

"Being pro-active and certifying that our facilities are compliant with the hundreds of federal regulations not only improves safety, but also shows we are responsible. Certification also can help prevent more regulations from coming down on us unnecessarily in the future, and that benefits us all," McArdle says.



ResponsibleAg board members were on hand to host officials from EPA, DOT and DHS as agency officials toured the Ford B. West Center for Responsible Agriculture in Owensboro, KY, in October 2018. The tour detailed the industry-led initiative, showcasing the facility audit process, ResponsibleAg Certification Program and auditor training.

The ResponsibleAg Certification Program provides a platform to help ag retailers ensure they are compliant and proactively manage safety risks using an assessment process and related training. Participating facilities are audited by a ResponsibleAg-credentialed auditor once every three years. Up to 17 areas of a facility can be assessed to ensure pertinent regulations from OSHA, DOT, EPA and DHS are

ResponsibleAg Board of Directors

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- **Rosemary O'Brien**, CF Industries Holdings Inc.
- **Gary Vogen**, Yara North America, Inc.
- **Daren Coppock**, Agricultural Retailers Association
- **Chris Jahn**, The Fertilizer Institute

being followed. The facility receives a corrective action plan listing issues that were discovered.

Safety important to communities, industry

Brandt is headquartered in central Illinois where anhydrous ammonia is a major source of nitrogen for the company's corn grower customers. Anhydrous obviously must be handled carefully.

"In our business, work comes all at once in the spring. We must be ready to do a lot of work in a hurry, while maintaining our compliance and safety practices," McArdle says. "Even though Brandt took great pride in our facilities doing everything right, when ResponsibleAg was formed, we challenged our facilities to participate. Today, we have 100 percent buy-in of all our locations.

"I believe the number one advantage of our membership in Responsible Ag is the benefit it provides the communities we serve," McArdle says. "Ag retail operations are near where customers, employees and their families live, work and go to school. By improving the safety and regulatory compliance of our facilities we protect our communities and put our industry in a good light."

Employee safety is an investment

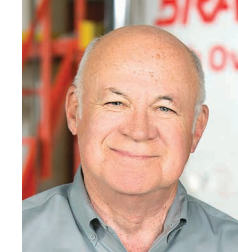
In an industry where sales and volume make or break a business, the impact on the bottom line is constantly evaluated. McArdle believes the value of ResponsibleAg certification goes far beyond dollars and sales goals.

"What is the value of knowing when you go to bed at night you've done everything in your power to make sure your employees aren't going to be injured?" asks McArdle. "It's hard to put a number on these things, but we all have a responsibility to make sure products are safely stored and handled and create no unintended environmental hazard. ResponsibleAg is a way to increase our accountability."

Competitors are partners to benefit all

McArdle says one of his biggest takeaways from being on the

ResponsibleAg board is to view his competitors as members of a team working on behalf of the industry.



TIM MCARDLE
Chairman of the Board,
ResponsibleAg

An all-volunteer board guides the organization; members serve as spokespersons working with regulatory agencies and elected officials, testifying on behalf of the industry. Members of the Communications Committee work to create awareness of ResponsibleAg and promote membership. Technical Committee members monitor the regulatory climate, represent the interests of

the fertilizer industry and keep the ResponsibleAg assessment checklist and online resource library current.

"ResponsibleAg leadership demonstrates a huge collaboration," says McArdle, former chairperson of the Ag Retailers Association. "These individuals put aside personal or professional interests and work together for common good. It really is amazing what we've been able to accomplish."

"We all become better, more responsible members of our local communities by collaborating and joining the industry-wide effort of ResponsibleAg."

– Tim McArdle

Today, there are more than 2,700 retail facilities registered with ResponsibleAg and more than 1,400 are fully certified.

"It's rewarding to see the level of participation, from manufacturers and wholesalers to independent retailers," McArdle says. "I encourage every ag inputs operation to participate. There is strength in numbers, which benefits the entire industry, and there is no price that can be put on keeping our employees, customers and communities safe."

For more information or to join, visit www.ResponsibleAg.org or call 270-683-6777.

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MISSION

ResponsibleAg is an industry-led initiative **committed** to helping agribusinesses properly store and handle farm input supplies. The program helps members ensure they are **compliant** with environmental, health, safety and security regulations to keep employees, customers and our communities **safe**.

