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ResponsibleAg Highlighted in Senate Hearing on Executive Order on Improving Chemical Facility and Security

WASHINGTON, D.C. – ResponsibleAg, a new safety and security initiative for fertilizer retailers, was highlighted today in a joint Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) and Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) hearing titled, “Oversight of the Implications of the President’s Executive Order on Improving Chemical Facility and Security.” In a joint statement submitted by The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) and the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), ResponsibleAg is featured as a cornerstone effort by the agricultural retail and fertilizer industries to promote safe storage and handling practices of fertilizer products and support federal regulatory compliance by all retailers.

ResponsibleAg is a non-profit organization to promote the public welfare by assisting agribusinesses as they seek to comply with federal environmental, health, safety and security rules regarding the safe handling and storage of fertilizer products. The organization provides participating businesses with a federal regulatory compliance assessment relating to the safe storage and handling of fertilizers, recommendations for corrective action where needed, and a robust suite of resources to assist in this regard. The formation of ResponsibleAg was formally announced in testimony delivered to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee in March of this year.

Today’s hearing comes just days after ResponsibleAg began to register retail agribusinesses for assessments, which are expected to begin in 2015. Assessments will be based upon a checklist of current federal regulatory requirements applicable to the storage and handling of fertilizer products. The checklist, developed by a technical committee comprised of industry regulatory professionals, contains more than 320 questions. Auditors credentialed under the ResponsibleAg Certification Program will use this checklist to assess the level of compliance at each participating facility.

“We are an accountable and responsible industry committed to the safety of the communities in which we operate,” said TFI President Chris Jahn. “Our employees live and work in communities small and large across the country, and nothing is more important than protecting our workers and their neighbors.”

The joint statement also highlighted pending establishment of an Alliance aimed at improving communications between agricultural retailers and first responders regarding workplace hazards and the safe storage and handling of fertilizers. ARA, TFI, the Volunteer Fire Council, the Ammonia Safety Training Institute, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will partner in this important effort.

“Some of the most effective solutions can be found in initiatives like the OSHA Alliance Program,” said ARA President Daren Coppock. “We believe that smart regulations are necessary, but they are only effective if the regulated community is aware of the rules, understands what it takes to be in compliance, and if the rules are consistently enforced. We look forward to further developing the OSHA Alliance partnership, which we believe complements our efforts with ResponsibleAg.”

TFI and ARA would like to thank EPW Chairman Barbara Boxer (D- Calif.), EPW Ranking Member David Vitter (R-La.), HELP Chairman Tom Harkin (D- Iowa), and HELP Ranking Member Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record.

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Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA) *The Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA), a 501(c)(6) nonprofit trade association, advocates, influences, educates and provides services to support its members in their quest to maintain a profitable business environment, adapt to a changing world and preserve their freedom to operate. ARA represents the interests of agricultural retailers and distributors across the United States on legislative and regulatory issues by educating members of Congress and agency officials on important issues affecting the industry. For more information about ARA, go to www.aradc.org, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter (@agretailers).*

The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) *is the leading voice of the nation’s fertilizer industry. Tracing its roots back to 1883, TFI’s membership includes fertilizer producers, wholesalers, retailers and trading firms. TFI’s full-time staff, based in Washington, D.C., serves its members through legislative, educational, technical, economic information and public communication programs. Find more information about TFI online at TFI.org and follow us on Twitter at [@Fertilizer_Inst](https://twitter.com/Fertilizer_Inst) and [SlideShare](https://slideshare.net/TFI). Learn more about TFI’s nutrient stewardship initiatives at nutrientstewardship.org and on Twitter at [@4rnutrients](https://twitter.com/4rnutrients).*