

Agrecovery Foundation - Chair's Report 2013/2014

The year under review was the second successful year of the board's five-year strategy, which has the central goal of increasing the amount of waste plastic and chemical removed from rural areas.

In the year ending June 30, 2014, Agrecovery collected 219 tonnes of plastic containers, a 39 percent jump from the previous year.

And a total of 19.9 tonnes of unwanted or unused chemicals were recovered, an increase of 26 percent.

The pleasing upsurge in container recycling and chemical recovery is a positive change in the habits of New Zealand farmers and growers. But there's still more to do, and government looks set to help.

Agrecovery is backing the government's move to support compulsory product stewardship under the Waste Minimisation Act.

This constructive move would compel all manufacturers of agrichemicals and animal health products to join Agrecovery, or be part of a similar product stewardship scheme. Total participation would increase funds available to recycle and recover, extra money that could be used to boost the number of places which accept plastic containers, and pay for more chemical collection events. Just as importantly, compulsory product stewardship should end confusion over which manufacturers' containers are recyclable, and which are not.

Agrecovery continues to work on ensuring that its operations are transparent and accountable. One recent improvement has increased the Foundation's flexibility in negotiating directly with contractors for chemical collection and container recycling. Agrecovery can now choose its own contractor based on coverage, delivery, price or location.

Another success in the year under review was the posting of a solid surplus which puts the Foundation on a firm financial footing and with a clear reserves policy. This is very important in an organisation with income that ebbs and flows seasonally but with expenses that do not.

Looking forward, advocacy to ensure agrichemicals and their containers are earmarked as priority products under the Waste Minimisation Act is a key focus for the year ending June 2015.

Another goal is further increasing container collection rates, with a new target of 230 tonnes. The target can be achieved. Progress is already well underway.

We must unlock ideas which encourage farmers and growers to recycle and recover. This might involve incentives such as burning bans. A ban in Canterbury from January 1 2014 resulted in a sharp increase in container recycling. So they do work.

The Foundation is also trialling new methods of collection, and will continue to show manufacturers – especially those outside Agrecovery - the value of supporting product stewardship.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Agrecovery board for its strategic work and guidance, acknowledge the significant input of Jenna Town, the Foundation's business manager, as well as the continued efforts of the hard-working team at 3R Group, the programme manager.

Graeme Peters
Chair, Agrecovery Foundation