

VALPAK TO LEAD FARM PLASTIC PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY RESEARCH

Valpak, the UK's largest producer responsibility scheme, has been appointed by CIWM (EB) to undertake a major research project for the Agricultural Waste Stakeholders Forum (AWSF). Funding will be provided by Defra through the Business Resource Efficiency and Waste programme (BREW).

The objective of the project is to research the economics and practicalities of collecting and recycling all farm plastic waste. The project will identify how producer responsibility for non-packaging farm plastics could work and how it will link into other Government legislation such as the packaging Regulations.

Working alongside Valpak will be ADAS, the UK's largest provider of environmental and rural solutions and policy advice to the agricultural industry.

Producer responsibility is a policy tool, set up by the Government, and is an extension of the "polluter pays" principle, which aims to make sure that businesses that put products on the market take responsibility for those products when they reach the end of their life cycle.

The aim of the policy is to achieve a more sustainable approach to use of resources and to reduce the quantity of waste going to landfill by diverting 'end of life' products for recycling or re-use.

There are already regulations in place to cover the recycling of all packaging waste including that from farms, but Defra recently announced that it plans to introduce producer responsibility regulations for non-packaging farm plastic. Farms in England produce an estimated 86,000 tonnes of plastic waste a year, three quarters of which is non-packaging material such as mulching film, polytunnel covers, silage wrap and sheets, and is not covered by any national producer responsibility scheme.

Preliminary research will be carried out to establish a best practice framework for collection and recycling. Adrian Hawkes, Director of Policy at Valpak says: "This is a natural extension to our existing work in packaging and WEEE compliance and we will aim to use the experience and expertise we have established in producer

responsibility to determine the best solution for the farming industry and its supply chain as a whole.”

Dr Andrew Ainsworth, Government Account Manager at ADAS said, "We are delighted to be working alongside Valpak to develop the first statutory producer responsibility scheme for agricultural waste plastics. This unique partnership brings ADAS' knowledge, skills and expertise in farming systems and agricultural waste management alongside Valpak's experience of producer responsibility. Our joint aim is to develop a scheme that is sustainable both environmentally and economically in the long term."

Ivan Good, Project Manager for CIWM (EB) says: "We are very pleased that the work will soon be under way. We are looking forward to working with Valpak and ADAS to develop proposals that will be practical and fully meet the needs of both the farming community and industry."

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Notes to Editors

- On 30 March 2006 Defra announced new regulations to apply waste management controls to agricultural waste for the first time in England and Wales. The new Regulations will come into force on 15 May 2006 and will apply the same controls on agricultural waste that have applied to all other sectors of industry for many years. These new controls not only strengthen environmental protection but also encourage the minimisation and recycling of agricultural waste. See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2006/060331b.htm>
- On 21 March 2006 Defra announced plans to develop statutory producer responsibility regulations to increase the collection and recycling of non packaging farm plastics. The regulations, which will be developed in collaboration with the devolved administrations, would cover England, Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland will consider introducing regulations following consultation. See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2006/060321a.htm>

- The Agricultural Waste Plastics and Collection and Recovery Programme proposes to identify best practice for collection logistics through the commissioning of a small number of trials, each carefully designed to meet specific objectives, but generally aiming to maximise the tonnage of waste plastics collected taking account of reasonable cost and optimum recycling and recovery levels. See <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/waste/agforum/subgroups/farmplastics/index.htm>
- Valpak is the UK's largest Producer Responsibility scheme, meeting the obligations of 3,000 UK businesses under the Packaging Waste Regulations. Valpak also runs a pre-compliance scheme for the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive. Further information can be found at www.valpak.co.uk
- Established for 35 years, ADAS provides independent scientific research, consultancy and contracting services to Governments, land and rural based industries in the UK and abroad. With core disciplines encompassing the living, growing environment, rural development and agricultural services, ADAS has over 725 staff covering more than 60 specialisms. ADAS operates from a network of offices and research sites in England, Scotland and Wales and works on projects covering technical, economic and policy issues.
- CIWM (EB), the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management Environmental Body, which is the delivery body for this project, is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Its objects include "research, development, education and the collection and dissemination of information about waste management generally for the purposes of encouraging the use of more sustainable waste management practices".
- Defra's BREW programme recycles revenue generated through increases in Landfill Tax to fund a range of free services and targeted support for businesses. From April 2005 the landfill tax rate for waste will increase by at least £3 per year until a rate of £35 per tonne is reached. Currently the rate is £21.
- Government has committed to making this increase revenue neutral to business and local authorities. In the Spending Review 2004 settlement Defra was allocated £284m (£43 million for 2005/06, £95 million for 2006/07 and £146 million for 2007/8).