

FARMING

Call to make recycling farm plastic as easy as possible

Farm plastic collectors have joined forces in a bid to create more specialist recycling facilities in the UK. **Sue Bradley** meets a West-based agricultural contracting business that's adding its voice to the campaign

EFFORTS to recycle more of the plastic used on British farms have been given a boost with the launch of a new industry-led initiative.

Several agricultural waste collection companies have thrown their weight behind the UK Farm Plastic Responsibility Scheme (UKFPRS).

The initiative aims to further increase the volume and quality of farm plastic that's recycled and, for the first time, offer audited tools to assess how much is being collected and reprocessed. Currently there's no accurate information available as to tonnages of farm plastics that are recycled, reused or landfilled.

Other plans include providing information to farmers on ways to reduce contamination within their waste plastic, promoting a sense of corporate responsibility within the supply chain regarding plastics put into the market and assisting with the exploitation of new technology geared towards reprocessing.

Crucially, UKFPRS will lobby the Government and other bodies for support in increasing the plastic recycling facilities available within the UK.

Spokesman Mark Webb, of Farm XS based at Hook near Royal Wootton Bassett, said the scheme is open to all collectors of farm plastics within the UK and operating on a not-for-profit basis, with funding provided by its members.

"There will be no additional cost to farmers and no levy on new plastic products," he said.

UKFPRS will handle both packaging and non-packaging plastics, including silage wrap and pit covers, feed and fertiliser bags, rigid containers, buckets, spray cans and polypropylene string, with collector members being identifiable through the green tractor logo.

Interest in and awareness of the environmental impact of farm plastics has been steadily growing in

recent years. Regulations introduced in the UK in 2006 made it an offence for agricultural waste to be disposed of by burning or burying, unless these activities were licensed or declared exempt. For around three decades much of the UK's waste plastic was exported to China to be reprocessed, but environmental concerns led the government there to implement more stringent policies that effectively closed the door to these imports.

