



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **New rules set for Fertmark fertiliser audits**

New rules for “controlled-release” fertilisers have been set by the Fertiliser Quality Council (FQC), the independent organisation responsible for the Fertmark quality assurance scheme – which verifies the composition of fertiliser products.

Recent changes made to the Fertmark Code of Practice stipulate that the principle nutrients, active ingredients and declared values of enhanced fertiliser products, such as controlled-release nitrogen fertilisers, slow-release nitrogen fertilisers and stabilised nitrogen fertilisers, must now be independently tested to meet Fertmark criteria.

FQC Chairman, Anders Crofoot, says farmers are welcoming the availability of more sophisticated fertilisers, because they can help to reduce nitrogen loss due to volatilisation or slow the release of nitrogen to better match plant needs.

However, he adds that as fertiliser products become more advanced, with many now coated to control the release of nutrients, fertiliser users need to know the composition of these coatings along with any other active ingredients that affect the base fertiliser product.

“With straight urea products, knowing just the nitrogen content should be sufficient. But with coated urea products knowing how the release of nitrogen will be controlled has become important – and this means verifying the active ingredients in the controlling agents.”

Mr Crofoot explains that the Fertmark tick is a highly respected stamp of approval, awarded only to fertiliser products which have been independently audited and proved to be ‘true to label’.

“In other words, the Fertmark scheme tells farmers and other fertiliser users that what they are buying is genuine and that the list of ingredients and quantities contained are not misleading.

“We are fortunate that most of the fertiliser companies operating in New Zealand volunteer their products for independent verification and so become accredited to the Fertmark programme.”

However, he warns that fertiliser users still need to be aware that there are products on the market, many imported, that are not verified – and which, without independent testing, could contain unknown and even harmful ingredients.

“Fertiliser is a big budget item. It pays to know what you are buying and what you are using on the land. We urge all fertiliser users to check with their suppliers that products have been Fertmark accredited before they buy them.”

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