



MEDIA RELEASE

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Physical quality of fertiliser is definitely on the agenda

The Fertiliser Quality Council of New Zealand (FQC) is reassuring farmers that discussions around achieving common ground for the physical quality of fertiliser are under way.

Anders Crofoot, FQC Chairman, says that although talks about standardising the physical qualities of fertiliser products have been going on for some time, the topic is still firmly on the radar.

“The FQC understands that the physical quality of fertiliser products can vary from batch to batch. This can pose problems for farmers and growers (particularly from the arable sector), who need consistency of fertiliser every time to ensure accurate and even placement, minimum environmental impact and maximum plant growth.”

Mr Crofoot adds that finding a solution is no quick task as fertiliser quality is affected by many variables, not least the many different types of fertilisers on the market – from single nutrients to blends, compounds and enhanced products such as slow release varieties.

“However, the issue of achieving consistency of physical quality in fertiliser is absolutely on the agenda and the FQC is working behind the scenes with the industry on this.”

Mr Crofoot says that other key variables affecting the physical characteristics of fertiliser include the way product is stored and handled.

“Particle strength, shape and size all affect the durability of the product as it moves through the processes of handling and storage. For example, small particles can crumb and are also more likely to attract moisture during storage. It is hoped that as we progress the idea of categorising physical quality, the supply chain can then tailor how best to handle and store products according to their physical components.”

The FQC recently issued a set of guidelines for storing and handling bulk fertiliser. This includes information and advice on receiving product in store, bagging off, transporting, avoiding caking and segregating products. The guidelines, which be downloaded from www.fqc.co.nz, printed as poster-size and displayed in fertiliser distribution centres, are currently being adapted for farmers to display on farm.

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Note to editors:

The Fertiliser Quality Council (FQC) was set up for farmers, by farmers in 1992 – initially to provide an assurance programme for the use of quality fertiliser producers. Later, its role was extended to include accurate fertiliser distribution. The FQC comprises over 30 executives from across the agricultural spectrum and is responsible for both the Fertmark and Spreadmark initiatives.

The Fertmark scheme was devised in 1992 as a voluntary fertiliser quality assurance scheme after the government withdrew from fertiliser auditing. The scheme involves an independent audit that verifies that what's on the label is what's in the bag. Around 80% of fertiliser products used in New Zealand are Fertmark approved.

Spreadmark is a quality assurance programme that guarantees accurate fertiliser distribution by trained operators using certified spreading machinery and a management system that puts economic and environmental farmer/grower outcomes first.

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