

## Issue

On June 10, 2019, the Government of Canada announced measures to reduce plastic pollution that includes bans on single use plastics.

## Background

The Government of Canada announced on June 10, 2019 that it would be implementing measures to reduce plastic pollution. This announcement follows similar laws passed by the European Union and California. It also comes with overwhelming support from Canadians – a recent CBC poll suggests that 82% of Canadians have been urging government action to tackle plastic pollution.

Key elements of the announcement that could impact plastic used in agriculture include, but may not be limited to:

- Banning some single-use plastics as early as 2021 under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act;
- Ensuring that companies that manufacture plastic products or sell items with plastic packaging are responsible for managing the collection and recycling of their plastic waste;
- Investing in new Canadian technologies; and,
- Mobilizing international support to address plastic pollution.

### **Will these measures come into law right away?**

No. Because of the current election cycle, any laws covering real measures likely would have to wait until after the federal October election. The June 10<sup>th</sup> announcement is simply a commitment made by the current government to be implemented after they are elected.

### **If the current government is not re-elected, will this issue go away?**

No. Plastic pollution is real and is threatening eco-systems and food supplies both at home and away. Most Canadians (and citizens on a global scale) want to eliminate plastic pollution. In Canada, every provincial environmental ministry has also agreed to a Canada-wide action plan to address Extended Producer Responsibility and Sustainable Packaging.

### **What are single use plastics?**

Single-use plastics, often referred to as disposable plastics, are commonly used for plastic packaging and include items intended to be used only once before they are thrown away or recycled. The types of single use plastics targeted by these laws include, among other items, grocery bags, food packaging, straws, containers, cups and cutlery.

### **What are common single use plastics used in agriculture?**

Some of the widely used types of single use plastics in agriculture include:

- Containers for liquid pesticides and fertilizers
- Feed and fertilizer bags
- Grain bags
- Bale and silage wrap
- Bunker covers
- Mulch film
- Twine and netting
- Greenhouse cover, grow bags, pots and trays
- Maple syrup tubing

**Will single use plastics in agriculture be banned?**

No. The proposed bans do not include agricultural plastics, however there may be 'unintended consequences' that could result from a ban or directive on other items. We will carefully watch and comment on the development of new legislation and regulation.

**So, do I ignore this announcement if agricultural plastics are not impacted?**

No. While single use plastics used in agriculture are not being banned, the plastic used in agriculture still needs to be managed. And, this announcement also includes measures to implement more 'Extended Producer Responsibility' (EPR) which means that a manufacturer or seller of these products are responsible for the collection, recycling and/or safe disposal of these products at the end of their life.

**Are there programs for these products?**

Yes, there are EPR programs for some of these products. Cleanfarms has been operating for 10 years to collect and recycle:

- Pesticide and fertilizer containers;
- Seed and pesticide bags;
- Obsolete pesticides and animal health products; and,
- Grain bags.

Not all the programs are currently operating in every province however there is a plan to do so.

**What do I do if I make or sell a plastic agricultural product in Canada that does not have a stewardship program or a plan to have a program?**

In short, call Cleanfarms. Cleanfarms is a not-for-profit industry stewardship company that manages agricultural products and packaging at the end of their life on behalf of the manufacturers and retailers of these products. We will work with all stewards to provide convenient and efficient methods of collection and recycling or safe disposal of agricultural plastic wastes.

**Won't these measures cost more to agriculture?**

That depends. In some cases, for instance, the cost of a stewardship program will be offset by the avoided cost of disposal. It should be noted that it is usually illegal to burn or bury agricultural plastics on farm. That means these materials must go to an approved incinerator or landfill, all of which usually charge tipping fees. Municipalities have also banned some products from their landfills because there are better recycling options.

Typically, the cost to properly manage these products can result in an increase from 1% to 10% of the original cost of the product, depending on the product. Programs operated by Cleanfarms requires the product recycling cost to be paid at the point of sale (either included in the cost of the product or as a levy at the point of sale). Once the product is discarded as waste, it can be taken to a collection point by the user with no disposal charge or tipping fee.

**Contact**

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