



## Building a Zero-Plastic Waste Strategy for Agriculture

### A spotlight on pilot project development in Ontario

Cleanfarms' Building a Zero-Plastic Waste Strategy for Agriculture is a multi-year project aimed at increasing agricultural plastics' (ag plastics) recycling capacity, entering the second year of pilot operations. This newsletter will keep you up to date on developments with the project and what these developments may mean for you.

---

This issue focuses on the pilot project development process in Bruce County, a livestock-intensive region in southwestern Ontario.

#### Getting started in Bruce County

Bruce County has a history of working on expanding the options available to farmers who want to uphold good land stewardship practices in the province.

At the outset of this pilot project, farmers were provided with plastic collection bags to sort, store, and transport their silage film and bale wrap to collection sites, and they brought in over 40 tonnes of material to date. This demonstrates the strong enthusiasm of farmers in Bruce County and quickly allowed us to evaluate the usefulness of collection bags as a way to ensure that ag plastics are stored in a manner in which they can be recycled efficiently.

Here are some of the key learnings:

- While offering collection bags allowed the pilot to get started quickly in the area, the bags can be cumbersome to incorporate into farm routines, especially for larger operations with daily practices of plastics removal.
- The volume of material that comes into collection depots requires a significant amount of space for storage, specialty equipment for pickup and transportation and significant coordination.

Pilots are all about discovering what works, what doesn't, and what could work better. In the case of on-farm compactors, they're essential to gaining a better understanding of the potential benefits and hindrances of using the tool.

#### Introducing on-farm compactors

On-farm compactors are an alternative to collection bags and are in use in various regions across Canada. Numerous models are available, each with slight differences in the mechanism used to compress the material.

These compactors are manually operated devices that compress large amounts of ag

plastic like silage film into dense square bales approximately 4'x4'x3' in size. The compactors make materials easier to store, which allows our transportation partners to coordinate more predictable and consistent pick-up schedules with collection sites to boost efficiency. By compressing materials, farmers are also increasing the volume of plastic that can be transported between collection sites and processors on each truckload, reducing the greenhouse gas emissions generated during the process.

In Bruce County, Cleanfarms first worked with two farmers to get an initial assessment of compactors as an alternative to collection bags. Following positive feedback, the focus turned towards identifying other large-volume users willing to try out this new tool. Fifteen on-farm compactors are now in use in the region, with an additional twenty coming into play over the next year.



*Ag plastic, freshly baled using an on-farm compactor and ready to be brought to a collection site.*

### Identifying ideal testers

Pilots are aimed at bringing the right tools and the right people together. In this case, the right tool might be a compactor, so the next step is to identify farmers willing to use it and provide feedback so that the tool and the process can be improved.

By nature, farmers are innovators and it makes them ideal candidates for these types of projects. They can see the bigger picture beyond just disposal. They understand that to build up an efficient and effective system, they need to consider reasonable changes to their on-farm practices and routines, as well as how the material will be received at various points in the recycling network – from transport to processing to final product. Farmers with this mindset understand and can help communicate how we need to shift perspectives so that used ag plastics can be seen as a resource and not just trash to get rid of.

Municipal staff have helped us identify these "ideal testers" in their communities and can continue to do so by connecting us with interested farmers. If you're a farmer in Bruce County and are interested in getting involved, email Jessica Jones, Special Projects Coordinator, at [jonesj@cleanfarms.ca](mailto:jonesj@cleanfarms.ca).

Watch out for the following newsletter to keep up with the pilots and [click here](#) to learn more about the project's other components.

**ACCESS THE RESOURCE CENTRE  
HERE**



Agriculture and  
Agri-Food Canada

*This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Canadian Agricultural Strategic Priorities Program (CASPP), a \$50.3 million, five-year investment to help the agricultural sector adapt and remain competitive.*

