

The Composting Association has been working for a number of months on behalf of its members in conjunction with WRAP and a range of key stakeholders to improve understanding of the main issues associated with increasing the use of compost in agriculture. This has focused primarily on concerns over food safety and hygiene and the opportunity for the biowaste treatment industry to demonstrate the rigour with which quality composts are produced, both from green and food sources, in compliance with regulatory controls.

This has been done through face to face meetings with a number of crop Quality Assurance Schemes and key industry bodies including; the Scotch Whisky Association, the Malsters Association of Great Britain, Quality Meat Scotland, the British Retail Consortium, the National Farmers Union of Scotland, the National Farmers Union for England and Wales, Assured Produce, and Scottish Quality Cereals.

There has been a general acceptance that green and food-derived composts have a valuable role to play in commercial agriculture, but that there are a number of key issues which need further attention concerning the potential risks associated with animal pathogens, physical contaminants and plant toxins that are hazardous to livestock (e.g. ragwort, ewe).that might be present in the finished compost.

Given the current animal health issues associated with Foot and Mouth and other animal diseases, the use of compost derived from food and animal by-products on grassland and fodder crops is a particularly sensitive area.

Compost producers and users in Scotland should note that Quality Meat Scotland' has decided that until an in-depth risk assessment has been carried out, the risks associated with the use of green and food composts on fodder crops and grassland could be unacceptably high. As a direct result of this, WRAP has commissioned work to be carried out by the McCaulay Institute to address these concerns as quickly as possible. In particular, the work will include assessment of the risks to livestock of ingesting compost that may contain plant toxins, such as ragwort, and fodder crops becoming adversely affected by agrochemical residues that could be present in the compost. Until this work is carried out, QMS has suspended the use of both green and food derived composts by all of its members.

Compost use in agriculture update

Thursday, 01 November 2007 07:31

This is clearly a challenging development, but it is important to highlight that no such issues affect the use of compost in the larger arable, vegetable, biomass and fruit growing sectors.

Attached is a more detailed assessment of current, on-going work that is being co-ordinated by WRAP. In conjunction with this, the Open University is carrying out a Defra funded study to explore the attitudes of consumers to the spreading of a full range of organic resources on land:

Stakeholder update October 2007 210.00 Kb

Appendix v 34.50 Kb

Should you have any questions of clarification regarding any of this work, please contact Jeremy Jacobs at the Association's office.