

by Guy Crittenden

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On the Farm

CleanFARMS™ explores new opportunities to manage on-farm waste

It used to be that waste generated on farms across Canada was simply burned or accumulated in landfill sites.

But for more than 20 years, the crop protection industry, under CropLife Canada's banner, has been helping farmers responsibly dispose of empty pesticide containers and to return obsolete or unwanted pesticides.

With those programs proven successes, CleanFARMS™ was created and is now exploring new ways to help farmers with other types of on-farm waste such as bale wrap, twine, unwanted animal health products,

among other waste products and packaging.

"We currently offer farmers across Canada access to world-renowned programs," says Barry Friesen, General Manager of CleanFARMS. "Our programs have one of the highest recovery rates compared to other stewardship programs in Canada, even though participation is voluntary. This shows us farmers have an appetite for these types of initiatives."

To help determine the types of programs needed, CleanFARMS is completing three studies in Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan to look at the types and quantities of inorganic

waste found on farms. These studies — the first of their kind — will also determine the best option to safely and responsibly dispose of such waste and look at cutting-edge ways to divert agricultural waste from landfills.

In addition, these comprehensive studies will determine who is responsible for bringing the products into the province, the associated costs of future programs, and the kind of stewardship opportunities that exist for these materials in the future. In Ontario and Manitoba, a survey of attitudes and behaviors was also conducted to determine how



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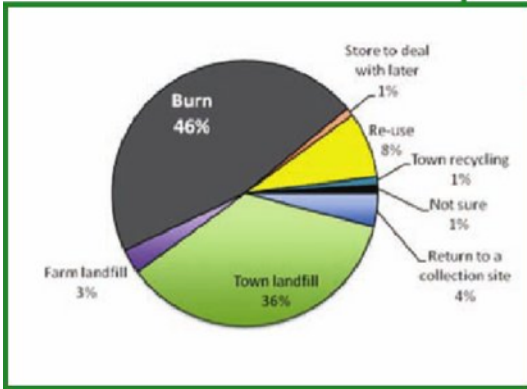
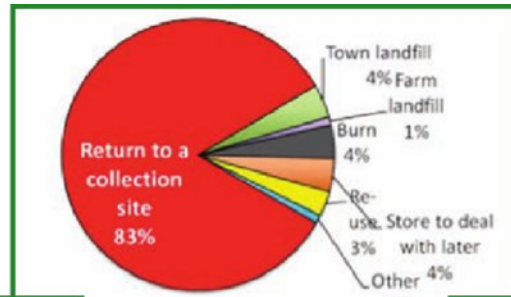
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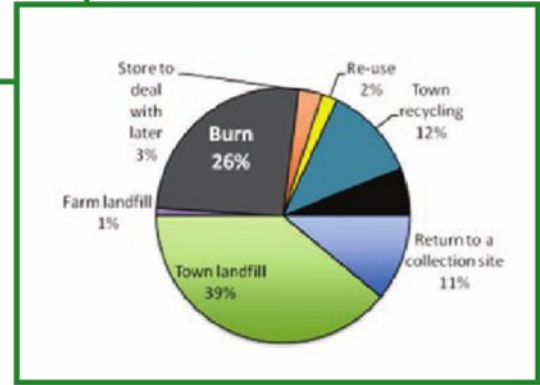
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The charts are excerpted from the attitudes and behaviors survey completed in Ontario. Results in Manitoba are similar.



many waste materials are currently being managed.

While cardboard may be one of the most common waste products generated on the farm, plastic is one of the most difficult to

deal with. There are also countless other waste products generated, ranging from tires, used motor oil, scrap metal to obsolete animal health care products. As it stands today, there's no one single coordinated mechan-

ism in place that allows farmers to easily and cost-effectively recycle or dispose of all of their waste with the exception of empty pesticide containers and obsolete pesticides. With the results of the study, CleanFARMS hopes

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to change this pattern and provide farmers with more recycling options.


Given that empty pesticide containers make up only a small percentage of all agricultural plastics, there's a significant opportunity to build on current initiatives and to expand outside of the plant science industry.

To complete the studies, the organization has received grants from different government organizations in each province. In Ontario, funding for the study was provided by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, through the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem, and the Canadian Animal Health Institute. CleanFARMS received funding

for the study in Manitoba from Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives through Growing Forward, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative, the Governments of Canada and Manitoba Conservation. Funding for the Saskatchewan study came from the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment.

To further round out the research, CleanFARMS has held webinars to provide producers, processors and distributors with an opportunity to discuss options for safely and responsibly managing on-farm waste. A session for the Ontario study took place in January and one for the Manitoba study was held in March. An industry consultation ses-

sion was also held in Saskatchewan. The studies will wrap up and findings will be released in 2012. The research collected will provide valuable insight into what types of industry stewardship programs should be developed in the future.

"We've had tremendous success with our empty pesticide container recycling program and our obsolete pesticide collection program. We see an opportunity to build on our existing initiatives to develop programs to manage all on-farm waste," says Friesen. 

*Guy Crittenden is editor of this magazine.
Contact Guy at gcrittenden@solidwastemag.com*

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