

Proposed Stewardship Program Plan for Designated Agricultural Plastics

Project Overview

Manitoba's extended producer responsibility-based model for managing end-of-life products requires manufacturers, distributors and sellers to implement or participate in stewardship programs to provide recycling and safe disposal options for the products and materials they sell into Manitoba. Conservation and Climate provides regulatory oversight for stewardship programs operating in Manitoba and the minister of Conservation and Climate approves all programs.

Cleanfarms Inc. (Cleanfarms) is a not-for-profit organization that operates product stewardship programs on behalf of the agricultural industry. Cleanfarms had been operating a government-funded agricultural plastics recycling program on a pilot basis for a number of years to test the feasibility of introducing a regulated stewardship program for agricultural plastics in Manitoba. This pilot scaled up each year and, given its success, the Manitoba government directed Cleanfarms to transition the program to a regulated industry-funded stewardship program.

In late 2020, Cleanfarms sought government approval for their proposed stewardship program for managing end-of-life plastics used in the agricultural industry. The proposed program included agricultural grain bags and twine, which are designated materials under the Packaging and Printed Paper Stewardship Regulation of the Waste Reduction and Prevention Act. As part of the approval process for the new stewardship program, Manitoba provided the public with the opportunity to review and comment on Cleanfarms' Proposed Stewardship Program Plan for Designated Agricultural Plastics to help evaluate the plan and develop recommendations for ministerial approval.

Engagement Overview

In developing their stewardship program, Cleanfarms conducted consultations targeting key stakeholder groups including farmers, businesses, organizations and industry associations participating in the agricultural sector. Cleanfarms outlined these consultation activities and feedback received in their proposed plan. Both the departments of Conservation and Climate and Agriculture and Resource Development reviewed and provided initial feedback on Cleanfarms' proposed plan.

The final phase of consultation, prior to ministerial approval, involved the general public providing feedback on the plan. Manitoba invited the public to review the Proposed Stewardship Program Plan for Designated Agricultural Plastics from February 16 to March 16, 2021 on the EngageMB public engagement website. The public submitted comments through the EngageMB portal. Conservation and Climate received and analyzed eight responses.

What We Heard

Conservation and Climate appreciates the feedback received on the proposed agricultural plastics stewardship program. Comments generally indicated interest and support for the program. One common theme from the feedback related to the costs associated with the program. The department received a mix of comments reflecting perspectives both in favour of, and against, the use of environmental handling fees as a means of funding program costs.

Like many other Manitoba stewardship programs, Cleanfarms' new stewardship program will be funded through environmental handling fees added to, or included in, the sale price of program materials. While industry may be passing the additional costs associated with responsible waste management on to their customers in the form of higher prices, it is ultimately the producers and consumers of products who are paying the cost of waste management. This is in line with the "polluter pays" principle of the extended producer responsibility model.

The public feedback did not identify any major issues of concern on the proposed agricultural plastics stewardship program plan. As a result, Cleanfarms was not required to make any changes to their proposal.

Next Steps

In May 2021, the Manitoba government approved Cleanfarms' stewardship program for agricultural grain bags and baler twine, effective April 1, 2021. Cleanfarms will operate the stewardship program on behalf of the agricultural industry and manage the collection and recycling of agricultural plastics. Manitoba producers will be able to drop off used grain bags and plastic baler twine at designated collection sites throughout the province without paying user fees at collection points. Cleanfarms will arrange for pickup, transportation and recycling of these materials from the collection sites.

Further details are available [here](#).

For more information

Please contact stewardship-plans@gov.mb.ca.