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RECYCLING AGRICULTURAL PLASTICS PROGRAM

RAPP Update - October 2014

COLLECTION AND MARKETING NEWS

- Over the last three months, six truckloads of used agricultural plastics weighing over 225,000 pounds collected across NYS have been moved to markets. Most of the material collected in NY is now being processed in NY, which is great for the economic activity! The largest volume is going to a recycling company in Brooklyn that makes trash bags.
- NBF Plastics, a division of North Brook Farms in Auburn, NY have completed their first runs of a full size 4'x8' plastic plywood substitute made from used agricultural plastics from NY farms.
- TAP Industries, a recycling redemption center in Malone, NY, is planning to process used agricultural plastics and sell plastic pellets to manufacturers, to use in new plastic items, creating a local outlet for farmers in New York's North Country.
- The Madison County Department of Solid Waste has been collecting agricultural plastics for a proposed plastics-to-oil processing facility at the Madison County Agriculture and Renewable Energy Business Park (ARE Park) in Lincoln, NY. Farmers are encouraged to collect and store their plastics at their farm, preparing them for recycling by cutting, shaking off soil, stones or plant matter and folding or rolling into easily handled bundles. They can then drop off those plastics at the landfill or at one of three county transfer stations. Not only does this divert these plastics from the landfill, it saves the farmer money on waste disposal costs.
- Two truckloads of mulch film weighing a total of 75,000 pounds were shipped to Delta Plastics in Arkansas this spring and an additional 80,000 pounds were recently shipped. This is exciting, as mulch film is considered very difficult to recycle because it is highly contaminated with soil.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

1. Best Management Practices Posters

Simple methods to prepare bale wrap, silage bags and bunker cover for recycling are presented in two posters: Preparing Agricultural Bale Wrap for Recycling and Preparing Bunker Covers and Silage Bags for Recycling. These files are available as both a Powerpoint and a PDF and can be printed on 11x17 or 8.5x11 paper. Hanging a laminated poster where workers are preparing plastic can ensure proper preparation and storage of plastics for recycling.

- Preparing Agricultural Bale Wrap for Recycling:
http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/BMP_balewrap_poster.pptx (ppt)
http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/BMP_balewrap_poster.pdf (pdf)



- Preparing Bunker Covers and Silage Bags for Recycling:
http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/BMP_covers_bags_poster.pptx (ppt)
http://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/BMP_covers_bags_poster.pdf

2. RAPP NYS Map – shows baling activity and locations, super sack locations and locations where RAPP education is occurring. <http://compost.css.cornell.edu/RAPPmaps.html>

LOCAL COUNTY FOCUS – DELAWARE COUNTY, NY

Delaware County started collecting agricultural plastics for recycling in 2013. The plastics are accepted at the Solid Waste Management Center in Walton, NY, where they are baled, stored and then marketed. To date, 14,000 pounds of agricultural plastics have been diverted and marketed. The key to this program is that Cornell Cooperative Extension of Delaware County provides outreach and on-farm education. Extension and farm personnel agree on a plan and they are put on an “approved list” at the recycling center. This one-on-one education has proven essential to avoid confusion and to aid farmers in understanding easy ways to collect and prepare reasonably clean plastics, as needed by recyclers. Farms are supplied with bulk bags (Super Sacks®) to aid with storing the plastic on-farm and to make it easier to transport it to the recycling center. To date, about 70 farms are participating in the program. If your county would like to set up this type of program, please contact Nate Leonard, NYS Field Coordinator (nrl3@cornell.edu or 607-255-8444).

USDA SPECIALTY CROP RESEARCH INITIATIVE GRANT ENCOURAGES AGRICULTURAL PLASTICS RECYCLING

USDA funded “Optimizing Protective Culture Environments for Berry Crops,” is looking at increasing berry production in the Northeast US with the addition of high and low tunnels (plastic covered hoop houses). As these producers start using larger amounts of plastic, it becomes increasingly important to encourage recycling of used covers. While the project is focusing on berry production, the recycling component will be looking at improved methods of collecting used plastic from greenhouses, hoop houses and high or low tunnels used for various crops. As large sheets of film have historically proven problematic to collect and bale for the recycling market, a roller system has been proposed that will reduce the labor required to take plastic off. The rolled plastic should be condensed sufficiently to ship to recycling markets without further processing. We expect there to be trial collections in NY during 2015.

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