

5. MINIMISING ORGANIC WASTE IN CANTERBURY

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This report summaries an investigation into organic waste reduction in Canterbury.

BACKGROUND

The Canterbury Waste Subcommittee through the Christchurch City Council contracted Landcare Research in May 2003 to investigate organic waste reduction in Canterbury. Specifically to:

- Estimate the amount, sources and destinations of organic waste in the region.
- Review current practices and national and international options for reducing organic waste including regulatory and voluntary methods.
- Provide recommendations and priorities for individual and joint Council action.

The full Landcare Research report is attached.

This report focuses on the recommendations resulting from this work. It should be noted that no one initiative will solve “the problem” and that the nature and scale of activity will depend on the community in question (one size will not fit all). Before considering the recommendations it is worth discussing the key themes that surround the organic waste issue.

KEY THEMES

- **Source separation** - To achieve the highest value use for the organic resources and to enhance education and producer responsibility, organics must be separated at source. Mixed waste sorting is not an attractive option due to contamination of the final products and loss of producer responsibility and opportunities for education.
- **Where possible, leave organics on-site** - To close the loop (return organic resources from where they originated or where they can be reused), to reduce costs and to enhance producer responsibility, the organics are best processed on-site (e.g. at home, in parks, in the grounds of institutions or businesses).
- **Organics collection hierarchy** - Organics are best processed on-site and all efforts should be spent to maximise this. If this is not possible, encourage (through incentives and disincentives) organics to be dropped off separately to a suitable processing plant. The last option to pursue should be an organics collection service.
- **Enhance existing beneficial uses for organics** - Many uses currently exist for organic waste for example, home composting, fat and bone collections, pig farm collections and commercial greenwaste collection services. Councils should provide the conditions that allow these uses to flourish and then focus on opportunities to reduce the residual organic waste.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regional Actions

- Develop educational resources for homes, schools and businesses that promote the separation and beneficial use of organic matter (e.g. home composting, resources for school composting programmes, guides for the hospitality, fast food and food manufacturing sectors, “how to do it and why” guides).
- Establish “zero waste” programmes in schools, universities and large institutions throughout the region. Larger institutions often have the grounds and staff available to compost on-site and have the added benefit of influencing the behaviour of their members and providing opportunities for education.
- Develop a “template” resource consent application for the development of compost plant operations to assist Councils with limited planning resources to establish composting operations.

- Consider and respond to the Canterbury Regional Council's proposed Air Plan Rule AQ 68, which may create a barrier to onsite composting for Council parks and gardens, institutions, schools and community gardens.
- After all other avenues have been pursued (e.g. incentives and disincentives, alternative services and options for composting) move to ban greenwaste from the landfill.

Individual Council Actions

- Establish open air windrow composting operations at or near Council resource recovery parks (refuse stations) and develop a differential pricing structure for dropping off separated greenwaste. In addition to the financial incentive, create a positive experience for individuals "doing the right thing" by physically assisting with dropping off the organic material, ensuring the site is clean and accessible, and has signage that reinforces the good behaviour etc. The price charged at the gate for dropping off separated greenwaste should cover the processing costs or be "subsidised" from the refuse tipping fee.
- Encourage and support the commercial kerbside collection of separated greenwaste on a user pays basis (e.g. commercially provided greenwaste wheelie bin collections). Also encourage and support the uptake of putrescible collection services from commercial premises (e.g. bone/fat collections and pig farm collections). This can be done in a variety of ways including providing a voucher system to entice new customers, by increasing the awareness of the service generally and through a reduction in rates.
- Investigate the establishment of a putrescible processing plant and the collection of suitable feedstock from households and businesses. Synergies should be investigated for biogas production in association with existing Bromley wastewater treatment plant and agricultural biogas production plants located at large dairy and pig farms.

CONCLUSION

A range of options exist for reducing organic waste. Councils are encouraged to select options that best meet their needs.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Canterbury Waste Subcommittee consider the report and recommendations further.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Committee hold two seminars in March 2004, one in Timaru (with the request that it be hosted by the Timaru District Council) and the other in Rangiora (with the request that it be hosted by the Waimakariri District Council).
 2. That following the above seminars each Council be requested to provide a written report, responding to the issues in the report with special reference to their own district, including consideration of the regional organics waste targets.
 3. That following responses from Councils the Subcommittee convene a working party to formulate regional organic action plans.