

William Dale & Son

Promoting compost use to farmers

CO2Sense Yorkshire has worked with composting company W Dale and Son to educate farmers about the benefits of compost, boost sales, divert waste from landfill and save carbon emissions.



In August 2009 CO2Sense issued an appeal to the region's composters who might benefit from support to promote their products.

The offer highlighted an opportunity for CO2Sense to partner with W. Dale and Son, a wood and green waste recycling company based in Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire.

Grant funding from CO2Sense has enabled W. Dale & Son to organise two seminars to raise awareness among farmers of the benefits of substituting inorganic fertiliser with compost.

This joint action has resulted in the sale of 5,500 additional tonnes of compost to three farms. This will save 462 tonnes of carbon emissions and help farmers reduce costs whilst maintaining yield.

The meetings, which were held in Northallerton and Wetherby, were addressed by leading agronomists Andrew Fisher and Peter Lambert.

They each presented research findings which

Composting

Benefits:

- Compost improves soil workability, drainage and water retention
- 84kg of CO₂ are saved for every tonne of compost used
- Compost increases crop yield
- Increase in compost sales
- Value-added use of compost

// CO2Sense is helping us spread the word to the region's agricultural sector about the benefits of using compost. //

Nick Dale – W. DALE & SON

demonstrate that the annual cost savings of using compost instead of inorganic fertiliser range from £30 up to £90 per acre.

Farmer Michael Wilkins told the meeting that he began using compost on his wheat fields at Steadfield House Farm in 2009.

He said: "The beauty of compost is its slow release nature. Inorganic fertilisers tend to be an instant hit of nutrient, whereas both soil and crops benefit from a prolonged slow release rather than a sudden rush.

"Also with inorganic fertiliser, what it says on the bag is what you get; while with organic compost you get all the trace element benefits and organic matter which promotes healthy soil."

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Alison Kahumbura - PROJECT MANAGER – CO2SENSE YORKSHIRE

Andrew Fisher said: “The cost savings which farmers can potentially make by switching to compost depend on factors such as the existing background fertility of the farm’s soil and the crop which is being grown.

“Because of the slow release nature of compost, most farms find they need to continue using inorganic fertiliser for at least a couple of years. It’s usually after the second year, when most farmers can stop using inorganic phosphate and potash, that significant cost savings arise.

“With longer term use, compost can significantly build up the background levels of fertility in the soil. As well as providing naturally occurring nitrogen, potash and phosphate, organic compost will slowly add to the soil’s organic content through humus.

“This is important because levels of organic matter in agricultural land have been falling in recent decades. Using compost also promotes biodiversity by reducing nitrate run-off and pollution which can be harmful to wildlife.”

A 2009 report by WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programm) called Using Quality Compost to Benefit Crops also shows how compost can boost crop yields (visit www.wrap.org.uk and search for ‘Using Quality Compost to Benefit Crops’).

Nick Dale of W. Dale & Son says: “By helping us set up these meetings CO2Sense is helping us spread the word to the region’s agricultural sector about the benefits of using compost. We were able to answer farmers’ questions directly and overcome some of the scepticism about its use.

“We also had the opportunity to let farmers know that there are readily available and reliable sources of quality compost here in their region. It has already resulted in increased sales for our business.”

CO2Sense project manager Alison Kahumbura says: “Composting helps divert waste from landfill and CO2Sense has calculated that every tonne of organic compost which is used instead of inorganic fertiliser saves 84kg in carbon emissions. That means that the long-term benefits to the region in reduced greenhouse gas emissions are significant.”



CO2Sense Yorkshire was established by Yorkshire Forward to help businesses in the region to prosper in the low carbon economy. We provide expertise and funding to help environmental companies to grow. We work with partners to help all organisations to fund and develop initiatives that reduce their carbon emissions.

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