

20-D-01306

s 9(2)(a)

Greenpeace Aotearoa/New Zealand  
s 9(2)(a) @greenpeace.org

Dear s 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 14 July 2020 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. *How much plastic by weight is being used each year to wrap bales of hay or silage? If you don't have accurate numbers, what is your best estimate?*
2. *How much of that plastic is recycled via the Plasback product stewardship scheme? If you don't have accurate numbers, what is your best estimate?*
3. *If you don't have the information I have asked for above, why is that the case? Have you asked the producers of agricultural packaging for the data and have you asked Plasback for the data?*
4. *How do you propose to respond to the problem exposed in this story?*  
<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/rafting-guides-one-nz-s-longest-rivers-pull-half-tonne-plastic-buller-gorge>

Our response to your questions is as follows:

1. The Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) does not generate its own information on plastic used to wrap bales of hay and silage each year and we are unable to provide an estimate.
2. Information provided to the Ministry by voluntary product stewardship schemes is commercially sensitive. Plasback has advised, however, that information on the amount of plastic collected by their scheme, as provided in their 2019/20 Annual Report, can be released. Plasback has collected 16,275.7 tonnes of plastic, most of which is silage wrap, since it started operations in 2006. The scheme was accredited in 2010. Since the 2010/11 financial year it has collected 15,829.4 tonnes of plastic.
3. See responses to questions 1 and 2 above.
4. On 29 July 2020, the Associate Minister for the Environment, Hon Eugenie Sage, declared farm plastics (along with five other products) to be a priority product under the Waste Management Act 2008.

A priority product declaration means a product stewardship scheme must be developed and accredited for a priority product, and regulations may be made to require sale of that product only in accordance with an accredited scheme for that product.

Regulated product stewardship is one of the tools available under the Waste Minimisation Act to help design waste out of our economy. Regulated product stewardship helps put the responsibility for a product's life-cycle and waste management on manufacturers, importers, retailers and users, rather than solely on communities, councils, neighbourhoods and nature.

The next step for regulated product stewardship is the co-design of the schemes for priority products and public consultation on regulations proposed by the co-design process. The Ministry has started the co-design process for farm plastics, which is being run by the Agrecovery Foundation with a broad representation of stakeholders, with support from the Waste Minimisation Fund.

We understand that the Plasback scheme has offered to collect the plastic silage wrap gathered from the Buller River to feed into its recycling scheme.

Catchments with significant dairy herds, including the Buller catchment, that are subject to severe flooding events would benefit from an initiative to foster good practice, with stakeholders such as their regional council, Federated Farmers, and Fonterra. Such an initiative would be eligible to apply to the Waste Minimisation Fund.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decision to withhold information relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on their website at: [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Please note that, due to the public interest in our work, the Ministry publishes responses to requests for official information on our [OIA responses page](#) shortly after the response has been sent.

If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Executive Relations team: [ministerials@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:ministerials@mfe.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely



Shaun Lewis  
**Director, Systems Change and Partnerships**

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