

**MEDIA RELEASE: RMCG and Growcom**

16 November 2020 – for immediate release

**NEW SCHEME TO TACKLE TOUGH PROBLEM OF PLASTIC WASTE IN AGRICULTURE**

A new initiative funded by the Federal Government’s National Product Stewardship Investment Fund is set to dramatically reduce plastic waste in agriculture and develop this waste into other resources under the National Waste Policy.

The agricultural plastics stewardship scheme is one of 15 successful projects recently announced by the Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management Trevor Evans. It will be led by agricultural and environmental consultancy RMCG with Queensland horticulture industry body Growcom as a project partner.

The scheme will help to address the extensive use of plastic in the agriculture industry and the current lack of recovery pathways for the material. The variety of plastics used in agriculture is significant and the state of the plastic after use can compromise its capacity for being recycled.

As the cost of labour and transport, and lack of services to recycle agricultural plastics is grossly limiting, most material ends up in landfill at best.

The scheme will facilitate and incentivise a viable market to recycle agricultural plastics that considers on-farm collection logistics, processing technology and equipment and development of recycled plastic products and their markets.

“This project provides a fantastic opportunity to reduce environmental harm to our land and atmosphere, facilitate farms plastics to be sustainable, as well as enable plastic collectors and processors to better service the agriculture industry,” RMCG Managing Principal and project lead Dr Anne-Maree Boland said.

The project will also create an opportunity to source separate agricultural plastics and sell back products to the farms, facilitating an industry specific circular economy.

“RMCG and Growcom will research and develop the scope, operation and governance structure to facilitate the future nation-wide implementation of an agricultural plastics stewardship scheme,” Growcom Hort360 Manager Scott Wallace said.

According to Assistant Minister Evans, the agricultural plastics stewardship scheme “will move the dial in Australia as we change our mindsets to thinking about waste as a resource”.

“Australians are increasingly looking to responsibly recycle or give new life to their unwanted products and this funding will deliver recycling schemes for items such as mattresses, used cosmetics, child car seats, old uniforms, coffee pods and farm plastics,” Assistant Minister Evans said.

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