



Healthy crops : Healthy animals : Healthy business

## Speech

Agcarm President Mark Christie to the 67<sup>th</sup> Agcarm Annual Conference

The Rydges, Wellington

EMBARGOED to 9.05am, Thursday 24 July 2014

Over the last year or so, I've been lucky to lead an organisation with a number of great successes and I expect many more in the future.

You are part of a growing and vibrant organisation.

I'll cover some of our recent achievements a bit later.

But my main focus for today is the future. I want to talk about the changes ahead for our industry.

Clearly, we face uncertainty with an election only two months away. Election aside, there are legislative and regulatory changes underway, including.

- One. Health and safety legislation is changing, as are hazardous substances regulations.
- Two. The approved handler regime set up ten years ago looks set to be replaced by the Australian model of user training.
- Three. The HSNO Act is going to change. The new Act will clarify the focus of the Environmental Protection Authority.
- Four. We're seeing ongoing change within the regulators, in terms of structure, staff, and approach.
- Five. The government is likely to adopt a compulsory product stewardship scheme for agrichemicals and animal health products and their containers.
- And finally, we're expecting soon an amendment to the ACVM Act to introduce data protection.

On all of these points, Agcarm has been busy representing your views to government to ensure the best outcomes for members, within the framework of the needs of government, various stakeholders, the environment, and wider society.

The first change I mentioned is the biggest shake up in health and safety for twenty years.

Agcarm has supported the intent of the Health and Safety Reform Bill, which aims to reduce the number of workplace accidents across all industries.

Something I think we'll all agree is a very worthy aim.

Agcarm also prepared a submission on the regulations which sit under the yet-to-be-passed Health and Safety at Work Act.

The submission supported a switch to managing health and safety risks, rather than hazards. This is something Agcarm has been pushing for years, so it's a great result. Risks need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and managed only if the risk is real.

Another change Agcarm supported – after much debate - was removal of the approved handler regime. This will be replaced by a manager's duty to train, inform, and supervise.

The advantage of this approach is that users will get training which is best suited to their needs. The one-size-fits-all approach of approved handler was not working.

Training must be fit for purpose.

However, there needs to be very clear direction from the government on what standard of training is acceptable. This needs to describe the obligations to provide training, to what level, and by when.

There also needs to be compliance activity and fines for those who do not train their workers. Otherwise we will see some users choosing not to train.

Turning to waste minimisation, another likely users ahead is that agrichemicals and animal health products, and their containers, must be part of a product stewardship scheme.

This is a big step forward. Why? Because it supports New Zealand's environmental responsibilities. It will also remove free riders who do not contribute to the recovery of unused product and containers.

In Agcarm's submission to the Ministry for the Environment, we made four key points:

First, farmers and growers have to be willing to use the service. There need to be incentives for them to participate. Otherwise your levy will be wasted.

Second, Agcarm members support enhancement of the current voluntary system which is Agrecovery. We should stick with this, rather than replace it with a government run bells and whistles scheme. We should stick with a proven scheme as opposed to an unknown government run scheme.

Third, we will not agree to a large increase in the twelve cents per litre levy. Some of the numbers proposed are unacceptable.

Turning now to market access.

For an export orientated country like New Zealand, global market access is essential.

It is very troubling that are seeing serious issues in Europe impacting on New Zealand industry.

One example of an emerging issue is the European Union's approach to banning so-called endocrine disruptors.

The EU may refuse substances which it says have endocrine disrupting properties. The European Commission is developing criteria on identifying these properties.

This is not just an EU domestic issue. The EU is also proposing that any imported produce which contains extremely low residues of endocrine disrupting substances, may be turned away.

This could potentially have serious consequences for New Zealand export trade.

There is an international effort underway to remove this potential barrier to trade.

Back in New Zealand, we deal everyday with the Environmental Protection Authority and the Ministry for Primary Industries.

Within these regulators, there have always been changes.

Often this change is very positive.

For example, MPI this week finalised its agrichemical labelling guide which now insists that all labels carry a resistance statement.

That's very good news.

Then there are the challenges.

One that has been creating plenty of discussion among members is a new policy at the EPA.

This is about Maori consultation.

The crux of the change is that applicants now need to consult with Maori on how a product may impact on Maori, before they lodge their application.

Previously, this was done by the EPA.

I'm personally looking forward to hearing from Gerald Coates, a member of Ngai Tahu's HSNO committee a bit later today on this very subject.

This change of policy was a surprise to Agcarm members. We made the point to the EPA's chief executive in February that he must talk with us before introducing new policies.

We have also seen change at the Ministry for Primary Industries. The ACVM group has been split in two.

The outcome of this split of the administration team from the technical advisors will be watched with interest – we wish them well in this period of change.

Turning to data protection, the latest update is that law drafters plan to write an amendment to the ACVM Act during the election recess.

This amendment will introduce three years of data protection for new uses and reformulated products, which is a step forward. Agcarm will continue to lobby to increase this three years to at least five years.

The other good news is that under the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, it's likely that new agrichemicals will get ten years protection. Of course, this all relies on the TPP being completed,

Which is a big if.

Another area where there has been much discussion in the past year is resistance management. And I mean that in the broadest sense – herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, anthelmintics and antimicrobials. Effective resistance management means our products remain useful for longer and hopefully forever.

Some of our members are suggesting that Agcarm take a greater role in the area of crop protection resistance management.

This is still under consideration.

But we are interested in the Australian model and whether it is suitable for New Zealand.

Agcarm has been involved with anthelmintic resistance management since 2005. Wormwise is currently going through significant changes to its structure which will give it more autonomy and will no longer be under the skirts of Beef and Lamb so to speak.

Regarding antimicrobial resistance, the Agcarm board has decided to set up an anti-microbial resistance subcommittee. It will discuss funding of research projects, engagement, communication and other key issues.

Animal health members have just completed some key messages on antimicrobial resistance. This excellent work was published on the Agcarm website this week.

Another piece of work Agcarm has been heavily involved in is the government's campaign on personal protective equipment. I'd like to congratulate distributor members for their co-operation during this campaign. This is an outstanding example of working collectively in an industry association on a positive project with government.

You will hopefully hear more about this from our next speaker, Environment Minister Amy Adams.

Moving from personal safety, Agcarm has continued to focus on bee safety.

Agcarm, in conjunction with the New Zealand Grain and Seed Trade Association, released a seed treatment stewardship guide.

This online resource is mainly for seed treaters. For farmers Agcarm released more targeted information. It is pleasing to see that bee hive numbers continue to increase and exceed 500,000 nationally now.

Agcarm also prepared guidance material on packaging crop protection products. The guide provides advice on materials, linings, membranes, pressure release values and types of plastic. It is also on the Agcarm website.

Agcarm has also launched an online source of member-only information.

This password-protected site allows access to newsletters, presentations, meeting information and more.

We know that many of you have logged in to this site. If you haven't already, please go and have a look.

In these times of change, there will be good change. There will be not so good change. The key is to make our voice heard.

There is plenty for us to do.

We need to be responsive and forward-thinking.

We need to be involved in the decision-making process, preferably well before the decisions are made, and then making submissions and winning the support of our industry partners.

And this is what Agcarm does well – in fact does very well.

Agcarm is increasing in size and influence because of this. We now have forty members.

New members over the last year are:

### **New members**

Manufacturers - Sinochem; Glenmark Veterinary and Key Industries

Corporate associates - Argenta, Medicines New Zealand, and Peracto.

Individual associates - Barry Axon, Victor Strang; Ben Vlaming and André Geelen.

Welcome to our new members.

Our networking and industry group meetings continue to be popular. At the last crop protection committee meeting, we had 20 people crowded into the BASF board room. Thank you BASF. There was good coffee too. This is a significant turnout and shows the value that member get from these meetings.

Some of the most important policy and technical work for our industry groups is developed at the crop protection, animal health, and distributor committee meetings.

In summing up, I'd like to thank all Agcarm members for your support during the year.

I'd also like to thank the board for its hard work. This leadership at a governance level is vital to the strategic direction of Agcarm.

I would particularly like to acknowledge Colin MacKay, who has stepped down as vice-president, due to ownership changes of Novartis.

They tell me the real reason is he's had enough of standing in as president. The other rumour is that he is going to be a stand in for David Shearer. They do look remarkably similar.

Colin has served on the board for four years - two of those years as vice-president.

Hopefully he'll be back when the dust settles after Elanco's purchase of Novartis.

So thank you Colin for your work, and for being my stunt double.

I'd like to welcome Lee Sheppard, Agcarm's new event and office administrator. She's done a wonderful job organising her first conference for Agcarm, and is full of new ideas for even better events in future.

It is now my honour to introduce our first speaker.

First, I would like to ask the audience to do something.

Please put your hand up if you care about the environment.

Thank you. It looks like our first speaker will have a very attentive audience.

She became a Member of Parliament at the 2008 general election, representing the rural electorate of Selwyn in Canterbury.

She was re-elected to Parliament in 2011 with a majority of 19,450 votes and was promoted into Cabinet.

Our speaker is Minister for the Environment and Minister for Communications and Information Technology.

Before being elected to Parliament, she was a partner with a law firm in Christchurch.

She lives in Canterbury with her husband Don and their two children on their 600 acre (243 hectare) sheep and cropping farm.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the honorable Amy Adams.

ENDS