



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

SUBMISSION

**Review of regulation for waste tyre use and storage
on farms**

26 June 2022

OUR POSITION

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward this submission regarding the EPA's draft regulation for waste tyre use and storage on farms.

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is the peak representative body for all Victorian farmers and Victoria's agriculture industry. As part of the VFF, Victorian dairy farmers are directly represented through our commodity group, the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV).

This submission has been prepared in consultation with our dairy farmer members and the national rural research and development corporation for the dairy industry, Dairy Australia (DA). **The VFF supports the DA's submission and the range of relevant guidance given to the sector by DA on silage production.**

Our submission demonstrates some of the potential benefit from a more risk-based approach to environment protection for agriculture, as well as highlighting the need to ensure a clear path for the agriculture sector to raise concerns with regulations that have not been designed for or considered for agricultural use.

Throughout the EPA reform process, the VFF has highlighted that agriculture is low risk and also a very different industry that needs ongoing consideration of issues as they arise post the introduction of the GED.

Victoria agriculture invests heavily in research and development and has industry guidance to manage a range of regulatory requirements – the environment, chemical safety standards, animal welfare, food safety, farm safety, climate change and biodiversity to name but a few.

The issue of silage production is key to many of these factors. Not only is silage a drought preparedness activity, it also improves animal nutrition and health. Farmers often grow specific crops to maximise the benefits for production and welfare and this reduces the need to use chemical additives.

Currently there is a focus on emissions intensity within the industry. Silage with certain properties could play a key role in lowering the enteric emissions per litre of milk, through reduction on inputs and through reduction in emissions from livestock.

Definition of Silage

The VFF requests an alteration to the definition of silage and silage productions within the regulations to reflect the current practice in silage production and to ensure that opportunities to reduce emissions per unit of production through silage is facilitated.

Following consultation with DA, the VFF suggests the following definitions replace the above in the new regulations:

- ***“silage means conserved forage from residual pasture or a specific crop for use as an animal feed”***
- ***“Silage production means producing silage through an anaerobic process.”***

Risk based approach – evolution of use of tyres

The VFF understands that while the use of tyres for silage is low risk, there is some risk and a need to ensure tyres are not dumped on farmland without agricultural production related use. We see the silage production use as an example of the circular economy and believe that substitutes such as weight bags do not offer the same performance as the use of tyres.

The VFF understands there is an emerging use of tyre mats for this purpose which would reduce the amount of material on site. **If this cannot be recognised in the current draft regulations, we believe there may be benefit in a future review to ensure there is flexibility that encourages evolution of practice to reduce further risk.**

Registration

The VFF supports the proposal for the registration of tyres used for silage. The VFF seeks assurances that this registration process will be without charge and is keen to work with DELWP and the EPA for a simple registration process, including reminders.

Guidance

There is a plethora of ‘state of knowledge’ documents that the agriculture industry is required to follow. The VFF’s preference is that industry documents be used where appropriate. In the past few years there have been several draft guidance notes prepared without industry involvement at the early stages. This, in the example of grazing, lead to significant rework and a long delay as the document did not understand the key environmental prevention and mitigation role that, for example, stock containment yards can play. In other examples, such as greenhouse gasses, the very specific differences in agriculture compared to other industries including decades of research and development, has not addressed.

Many dairy farmers are Country Fire Authority members and fully understand how to manage the fire risk of the tyres on farms. They also understand the OH&S issues relating to the use of tyres. Industry is best placed to ensure that reasonably practicable outcomes are developed.

The VFF believes it is crucial that both the VFF and DA are involved at all stages of the preparation of Industry Guidance on the use of tyres for silage.

Estimating the number of tyres

The methodology of counting tyres was outside the scope of the Regulations. In preparing the RIS and as part of the industry survey, this issue was highlighted as being important as to providing greater accuracy to the results. The volumetric approach seems to be quite practical an approach, especially as there is no longer a license tier. If a future revision of the regulations occurs, this method could be included in relation to registration.

Given the ‘indicative’ nature of estimates for the number of tyres, the VFF does not support sanctions against any farmers where they do not agree with the number as estimated. For example, where a farmer provides estimates in their registration documents that EPA later disagrees with.

The VFF calls on the use of the volumetric measurement methodology for registration and for use in Guidance Documents and that it is an estimate of the number of tyres at the time of registration.

Location of tyres

The definition of a 'location' to be used in registrations is unclear. One farming business may consist of several land holdings. This could raise the question that a separate registration be needed for each holding? Within a holding there may be multiple silage locations. Does registration need to identify the location?

We see the need for consistency on these matters to ensure a consistent approach across the state and one that relates to risk – and the benefits of registration. Some farmers may prefer the concentration of silage in a single location so that risks can be managed. Others may wish to separate silage areas so the number of tyres in each area is lower. We also understand the benefits of knowing where silage is located. Flexibility to best manage within that farm business can be achieved by interfaces with Mapshare to note locations.

The VFF requests a single registration per farm business with the ability to geocode / geolocate multiple silage pit locations within that farm business.

Given the 'indicative' nature of estimates for the number of tyres, DA does not support EPA using these figures as the basis for undertaking sanctions against any farmers where they do not agree with the number as estimated. For example, where a farmer provides estimates in their registration documents that EPA later disagrees with.

CONCLUSION

The VFF supports the Regulation as a sensible step which recognises the low risk to the environment of the use for tyres as silage weights.

At a minimum, we are seeking the use of a more practical definition of silage and silage production.

The VFF is also willing to work with Dairy Australia, DELWP and EPA to ensure the implementation of the Regulation reflects state of knowledge and good industry practice and to identify resolution of emerging issues such as tyre mats.

Please contact VFF Senior Policy Advisor Lisa Gervasoni directly by email lgervasoni@vff.org.au to arrange any future discussion or actions.

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