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COMPOST STORES CARBON AND HELPS FEED THE SOIL

Benefits of Compost Highlighted During International Compost Awareness Week 2021

Compost organizations around the world have joined forces to highlight how composting can recycle carbon, help mitigate climate change and feed the soil. *International Compost Awareness Week (2-8 May)* showcases how recycling organic wastes into compost can benefit the environment and people by locking up carbon in soil, returning nutrients to degraded land while also supporting food security and improved nutrition.

Globally, composting currently:

- Recycles **83 million tonnes** of biowaste every year.
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by **9 million tonnes** of carbon dioxide equivalents a year through storing carbon in soil and offsetting fertilizer use. This is equivalent to driving an average car for 36 billion kilometers (23 billion miles); almost 95 thousand times the distance between the earth and the moon!
- Recycles **1 million tonnes** of plant macro nutrients, equivalent to EURO 702 million, CAD 1.1 billion or USD 807 million a year.

These annual benefits could be **increased over 12-fold**, if the world's biowaste were collected separately and composted. To help bridge this gap, this year's *Compost Awareness Week* will engage with thousands of volunteers around the world to hold educational activities, working together to get the word out about the many benefits of recycling organics and the importance of returning organic matter – compost – back to our soils.

QUOTES:

Stefanie Siebert, Executive Director of the European Compost Network, said: *“Composting organic wastes is a win-win solution. Not only does it reduce the harmful effects of leaving biowastes to rot in landfill sites or be lost through incineration, but it also helps keep soil healthy by promoting biodiversity and ecosystem services. Compost Awareness Week aims to communicate these benefits to people across the world.”*

Percy Foster, Chief Executive of Cré: Composting and Anaerobic Digestion Association of Ireland said: *“Compost is going to play a major role in regenerative agriculture with farmers trading soil carbon credits. Our sector looks forward to working with all in achieving this!”*

Jenny Grant, Head of Organics and Natural Capital at the Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA), UK, said: *“Compost has multiple benefits. It is a brilliant soil improver, can increase organic matter, helps store carbon in soils and helps avoid the need for chemical fertilisers. By treating food and garden waste through composting, it also helps to mitigate climate change from avoided emissions. We encourage the separate collection of biowastes from householders and businesses to ensure we are able to maximise the benefits of these valuable resources.”*

Massimo Centermero, Managing Director, Italian Composting and Biogas Association, said: *“Since the 1990s, Italy has been composting increasing quantities of food waste, currently circa 5 million tonnes which represents 70% of all the food waste available in the country and about half of all food waste composted in the EU. We return about 2.5 million tonnes of high quality compost to soil, and in a country at risk of desertification, this contributes to resilient, long term agricultural security. The key to success is high quality inputs guaranteeing high quality outputs and technologically advanced plants capable of managing these wastes.”*

Susan Antler, Executive Director of the Compost Council of Canada, noted that: *“Research shows that compost supports crop productivity and can improve the nutritional content of vegetables grown in it. At a time when almost ten percent of the world’s population is exposed to severe food insecurity, compost is a natural and, with focus, accessible solution to improve both the quality and security of food for everyone.”*

Frank Franciosi, Executive Director of the US Composting Council, added that: *“As the USA nears the centenary of the 1930s ‘Dust Bowl’ caused by over farming and the loss of our country’s valuable soil organic matter, we would be wise to remember the importance of returning organic matter back to our soils, doing everything in our power to prevent a twenty-first century repetition of this disaster.”*

Chris Purchas, Chair of WasteMINZ’ Organic Materials Sector group, said *“Compost is an important part of the transition to a circular economy and the decarbonisation of New Zealand. This year as Aotearoa makes progress towards reducing our carbon emissions, composting will become an increasingly important part of the solution with many territorial authorities rolling out organic waste collections for their communities and businesses diverting organic materials to compost manufacturing.”*

Peter Wadewitz, Chair of the Australian Organics Recycling Association, concluded that: *“For something so fundamental, it is time for governments to step up and tear down the remaining obstacles to permit composting to deliver its full potential. Declaring strong near-term targets and clearing up government and regulatory policy uncertainties, improving compostable standards to reduce contamination from potential input materials and establishing government specifications and procurement practices for organic recycling products will boost our collective ability to build this complete environmental and economic success story.”*

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Started in Canada over twenty-five years ago, *International Compost Awareness Week* has continued to grow as more people, businesses, municipalities, schools and organizations are recognizing the importance of organics recycling and compost use.

International Compost Awareness Week Partners work together to broaden the understanding of compost use and promote awareness of the recycling of organic residuals.

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