

Recycling Agricultural Plastics: New Report Encourages Alternatives To Burning, Burying, Dumping

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"Recycling Agricultural Plastics In New York State" is a new 30-page report about recycling options for agricultural plastics. It addresses concerns about the environmental health effects and other liabilities of burning, burying, or dumping plastic wastes on farms by describing off-farm recycling and re-processing alternatives.

Plastics are being used increasingly in all sectors of ag-

riculture. Plastic products are being substituted for the longer lasting materials previously used because they often cost less and improve production efficiency (e.g., plastic silage bags result in better feed quality).

However, as with many throwaway products, disposal is a problem. Surveys indicate that more than half the agricultural plastics in New York State are disposed of by open burning, which releases high levels of polluting emissions. Most of the remainder is buried or dumped on-farm. Emissions from open burning

are much greater than from controlled incineration and these emissions pose risks to human health.

"Recycling Agricultural Plastics In New York State" identifies major uses of plastics on New York State farms, recycling technologies that are viable or that may be realistic in the near future, technical and infrastructural issues, and processes, agencies, and individuals involved. It addresses concerns of the agricultural, environmental protection, public health, and economic development communities.

The report was written by

Lois Levitan and Ana Barros of Cornell University's Environmental Risk Analysis Program. The full report, a one-page executive summary, a bibliography with hyperlinks to full text of all references, and a photo gallery of agricul-

tural plastic uses and recycling equipment is posted to the Website of the Cornell Environmental Risk Analysis Program: <http://www.cfe.cornell.edu/erap/C&ER>, or call (607) 255-4765 to order a print copy.

Ponds Meet Small Farm Needs

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recreational purposes. This is a sound practice, but has liability and maintenance obligations to consider.

Generally, pond owners must eliminate and warn against hazards around a pond. This might include fencing off pond edges, supplying rescue devices, and establishing regular hours and

rules of access. Recreational ponds used for income should be dedicated solely to that purpose and thus are not available for agriculture uses.

You can access additional pond management topics online at <http://pond.dnr.cornell.edu>. For information on a variety of small farm topics, visit Cornell's Small Farms Website at www.smallfarms.cornell.edu.



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