LIME POISED TO BENEFIT FROM RISING PRICE OF FERTILISERS

With farmers facing huge increases in the price of fertilisers, some of which are further hit by foreign shipping costs, the country's lime industry is pointing to the benefits of their locally-extracted product.

New Zealand Limestone Producers Association chair Shaun Cleverley says farmers are having to reassess what they do, with fertiliser costs only one of several factors stretching farm budgets.

"To be fair, farmers are always doing that to some degree but do it more so when financial constraints impact."

Shaun, who manages two Canterbury lime quarries for Palmer Resources, says while lime has risen in price, it hasn't seen rises like the doubling of the cost of urea and 50%+ lift in fertilisers such as magnesium, sulphur, and potash.

"So, it's a good time to get pH levels to optimal levels for nutrient availability."

Steve Smith, GM at AB Lime in Southland, says with fertiliser prices high, some farmers may concentrate on fixing their soil pH.

"Soil acidity has an effect on the availability to plants of nutrients like phosphorus, nitrogen and potassium and lime helps address that."

However, he says with today's focus on the environmental effect of agriculture, including fertiliser use, farmers need to choose their fertiliser programme wisely, making sure it works with their farm and farm system goals.

"Lime is an important component in the mix, and it's a particularly good option at the moment while fertiliser prices are so high – but it doesn't replace fertiliser long-term," says Steve.

> **"It provides great bang for your buck by fostering optimum availability of all other nutrients, so now is an especially good time to use lime"**

Keith Squires, GM of Avoca Lime in Whangarei, says lime is an important way to "sweeten the soil" by boosting pH levels.

"It provides great bang for your buck by fostering optimum availability of all other nutrients, so now is an especially good time to use lime." ■


Shaun Cleverley