

Fonterra turns to wood to help fire dairy plant

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Brightwater plant

FONTERRA says it will replace some coal with wood at one of its factories, a move expected to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2400 tonnes a year.

The dairy co-operative is one of New Zealand's largest users of coal, and is under pressure to switch to a more climate-friendly fuel-source.

It has now said it will cut emissions at its Brightwater factory, near Nelson, by 25 per cent by converting the existing boiler to burn wood biomass as well as coal to generate steam, using funding from the Government's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority.

Fonterra chief operating officer for global operations, Robert Spurway, says the move is equivalent to taking 530 cars off the road, and is a step meeting the company's goal of reducing emissions from its dairy factories by 30 per cent by 2030, and to zero by 2050.

"Last year we joined forces with the Ministry for the Environment to develop a roadmap to a low emissions future, which included a commitment to undertake a demonstration of co-firing wood biomass with coal at one of our sites," he said.

SERIOUS MOVE

"Now, with the support of EECA, we're putting our co-firing strategy into action."

The move is being welcomed by the Bioenergy Association, which says it shows Fonterra is serious about cutting emissions.

The move to convert the existing coal boiler at Brightwater follows a successful trial that was undertaken in 2017. It is expected that the boiler will be able to co-fire with wood biomass by October this year.

Bioenergy in the news

“Fonterra is ahead of its 2019 target to demonstrate wood biomass co-firing at scale, and is another step further in its phased approach towards renewable energy sources,” said Bioenergy Association chief executive Brian Cox.

“The move to wood biomass as an energy source signals a confidence in the bioenergy sector and is good news for the wood-fuel supply market.

GOOD STRATEGY

“Co-firing wood with coal is a good transition strategy and assists the wood-fuel supply sector to increase capacity in an orderly fashion. This is critical for encouraging wood-fuel suppliers to take on more staff and expand their ability to deliver specified grades of wood fuel.”

Fonterra is in a business partnership programme with the Ministry for the Environment aimed at encouraging businesses to cut emissions.

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