**“OUR COUNTRYSIDE: A LIVING SPACE TO SHARE”**

**Cultivating good relationships to live together in harmony**

**Odours**

Most of the time, country air is a mixture of scented flowers, mown hay, freshly fallen rain… and sometimes the scent of manure spreading. Although this is a disagreeable smell, manure spread on the fields at certain times serves as a natural fertilizer and is important in regenerating the health of cultivated soils. In other words, it feeds the soil so that the soil can in turn feed us as it helps plants, vegetables, and cereals grow.

This organic matter naturally enriches the soil with nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, etc.), while reclaiming animal waste and reducing the need for mineral fertilizers. It is an essential source of agricultural fertilizer.

For several years, farmers have preferred new practices to reduce odours from livestock and soil fertilization. For example, farm machinery now allows manure to be applied closer to the soil through ramps, which reduces the projection of manure into the air and therefore reduces associated odours. Immediate incorporation is also a useful practice; once incorporated into the soil, manure nitrogen is transformed into odourless nitrates and can be assimilated by plants thanks to the microorganisms present in the soil. In addition to reducing odours, this method also increases the efficiency of fertilization.

Several farmers have also planted wind-break hedges or woodlots that create a barrier against odours between agricultural properties and those of other residents. Livestock farmers can pay particular attention to manure storage by installing a roof over their watertight storage pit, by improving ventilation to farm buildings, or by perfecting processing of animal waste from their farm. For example, some farmers are composting by adding straw or wood shavings to their manure, which transforms it into rich, odourless compost. Farmers must also comply with municipal regulations that set out minimum distances between the urban perimeter and livestock sites.

Practices continue to evolve. Until the early 2000s, farmers spread manure in the fall. Research has shown that it is better to spread in the spring, when plants are growing. Today, farmers are optimizing the application of manure while significantly reducing the olfactory impact. Agriculture is a happy blend of many techniques to promote healthy arable land, while still taking care of the neighbourhood.