



Growth industry

Nutritive boost: Pelletised sewage sludge shows good potential as a fertiliser.

By LYNDAL READING

A NEW pelletised fertiliser made from dried sewage is “showing promise” according to Southern Farming Systems.

SFS research and trials co-ordinator Annieka Paridaen said preliminary results showed it improved yield and the plants were well established and vigorous early in the season.

“We just put it down the cone with the seed and the plants were

able to use the nutrients straight away, so they came up pretty well,” Ms Paridaen said.

She said the product had only been trialled for one season but was “showing promise.”

The fertiliser is produced at Barwon Water’s plant at Connewarre near Torquay and made from dewatered sludge from sewage.

The plant, the biggest in the southern hemisphere, was officially opened by Water Minister

Peter Walsh last month. Project co-ordinator Michael Naughton said the plant could produce 8000-9000 tonnes of fertiliser initially and could scale up to 12,000 tonnes in future.

A typical breakdown of the pellets is elemental phosphorus about 2.2 per cent, nitrogen is about 6.7 per cent and carbon about 38 per cent.

He said in some cases the pellets could replace traditional fertilisers, depending on the require-

ments of the crops and the plan operator, Plenary Environment was looking for farmers to use the product.

Information from Plenary shows the phosphorus, nitrogen and carbon breakdown is similar to the dewatered sludge.

A spokesman said the spreading rate would be approximately 500kg per hectare, but should be altered depending on soil analysis.

He said the product cost was being finalised.