



James Long, Irish-born Australian manufacturer whose company Bio Agricultural Developments has now been granted approval for sale in Ireland; Billy Fitzgerald, picture was taken in Billy's field where the product showed outstanding results after just four weeks. Also pictured is Jim Long, former Mayor of Limerick, Jim has worked closely with James and his team in Australia for government accreditation and Niall Collins, Minister for State and Pat Keane, Bio Agricultural Developments project manager

Limerick entrepreneur brings innovative organic fertiliser 'black gold' home

A NEW organic fertiliser product from Down Under looks set to be the answer to the prayers of hard-working farmers across the country. Unpredictable weather patterns, and myriad environmental regulations mean Ireland's agricultural community has never had it so tough.

One of the biggest tasks for farmers is ensuring compliance with the nitrates directive, which compels them to prevent the pollution of waterways from agricultural sources, as well as cutting ammonia emissions. Now, a Limerick-born businessman is bringing to market a unique new organic fertiliser product, which will comply

100% with these strict environmental directives. James Long, who hails from Ballinacurra, is the sole distributor in Ireland of Black Gold Organic Fertiliser. Free from nitrates, and with a base of seaweed, the product promises to give great yield to both cost-conscious farmers and the wider community.

"It's aimed at dairy farmers, crop farmers, nurseries, those who manage GAA pitches and golf courses. Anyone who has an intent to improve the growth in their grass," James explains. "We have put years of research and development of this into Australia. Due to it being a powder format, we are able to import it. Once the product is

activated with water, we can guarantee farmers more coverage on their land for a cheaper price," adds James, who is a shareholder in the manufacturing company in Australia. James's father Jim Long, a former Mayor of Limerick, has invested in the concept, such is his confidence in it. He describes the product as a

"win-win" for the environment, for land, farmers, Government and the European Union (EU). "This product will comply 100% with the EU directives of getting rid of mulch. It is the answer to the European directive on nitrates, and getting rid of nitrates and ammonia out of the land. It will safeguard the water tables. It gives bigger yield, and a bigger product. It is 100% organic, so it's very good for the environment," he said. In a further boost to the company, Black Gold Organic Fertiliser has received certification from the Department of Agriculture after a strict two-year assessment period. James, who moved to Australia 20 years ago, and now splits his time between Down Under, and at the premises of BioAgricultural Products Ireland Ltd, the parent company of Black Gold Organic Fertiliser in Smithstown, Shannon, Co Clare. It is thanks to support from the Local Enterprise Office in Clare that the business has been able to enjoy a strong start on these shores. A number of farmers around Ireland are already trialling the product and James is aiming for modest growth initially. This is a lesson he has learnt from various business mentors through the years. "Build it slowly then build it big," he explains. "At the end of the day, we have limited stock in Ireland, but we have unlimited supply. With a project like this, we want to be very careful we can supply the farmers and they will see the benefit of what we have." To this end, he plans to visit as many farmers as he can in Ireland to give them a flavour of what to expect from Black Gold Organic Fertiliser. "We will be an e-commerce business to start with. But we are in talks with some big suppliers and co-ops to take the product. As I previously said, it's something we want to take slowly to the market in a proper fashion." Often it can be hard to replicate the success of a product in such wildly different climates as Ireland and Australia.

But Jim said: "Myself and James had a discussion about this. He asked if I thought it would work in Ireland and Europe. I said, 'if it is working on dry land in Australia, it will certainly work on wet land here.' Many millions has already been spent on the product, James says, both in terms of research and development, the logistics of moving stock thousands of miles across the world - and that's before coming into Ireland, and facing the set-up costs, approval and grant aid. James invested in Bioagricultural Products in 2017 on the basis that he would have the distribution rights for this territory. During his time on Limerick City Council, his father was well-known for his environmental activism, and has always been aware of the need to look after the planet for the next generation. "I am 100% aware of the pollution which has been caused by nitrates and ammonia. This is the way to reduce it and to stop it. I'm a shareholder in the company. But my investment is for my grandchildren, my great grandchildren and for the future of Irish farms," he says. Limerick County TD Niall Collins, a Minister of State at the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, has advocated for Black Gold Organic Fertiliser with his colleagues in Government. "I've spoken to some of the farmers involved in the trialling of the new organic fertiliser and certainly, they seem very positive about it, which is really good. We have to try and find new innovative ways of doing our farming," he said. "We do have our climate change challenges and our nitrates challenges. This presents a real opportunity to try and address those challenges. I think the Department of Agriculture and Government need to take these concepts seriously. Innovation is about change - it's about bringing about change in the right way. That's what we want to see in our farming sector," he added.

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PICTURE SPECIAL FARM SAFETY AND SECURITY EVENT



Sergeant Niamh Brosnan, Inspector Gearoid Thompson, Niall Collins, Minister of State; Sergeant Michelle O'Halloran, Sergeant Tony Miniter and Sergeant Caimin Treacy at the Farm Safety and Security event at Kilmallock Mart

PICTURES: BRENDAN GLEESON



Mona, Shay and Ella Concannon with Mark O'Donoghue, ICSA Life Focus



Christy, Alan, Rosin and AJ Lyons at the Farm Safety and Security event



Tom Brown with Aine Lynch National Parks and Wildlife Services



Lisa Tierney, Embrace Farm with Tom O'Callaghan

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Wednesday 5th October Calf, Runner and Weanling Sale Intake 1 Noon, Sale 3:30pm

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