



Media release

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Industry applauds moves to make top-dressing airstrips safer

An industry airstrip safety initiative is being led by Ballance Agri-Nutrients' Super Air operation and has been recognised by the Agricultural Aviation Authority as a model for the industry.

Super Air's airstrip safety project aims to minimise the impact of poor weather on aerial top-dressing, by working with farmers to establish a number of all-weather airstrips around the country.

Commercial Manager Graeme Martin, one of the driving forces behind the initiative, will be outlining Super Air's successful strategy to the rest of the aviation industry at the annual Aviation Conference to be held on 13th October in Rotorua.

Graeme says Super Air has been working closely with farmers to establish all weather strips that have a high-quality surface that enables planes to take off and land safely even in wet weather. "Other features include purpose built fertiliser bins which can store up to 260 tonne of product, with metallised access tracks to ensure deliveries can be made in all but the worst conditions."

"An important part of the new airstrip strategy is the safety guidelines in place for all pilots using any farm airstrip. Before pilots can fly from an airstrip, they must conduct a risk assessment, checking the airstrip runway surface, approach and fly-away paths, obstacles such as fence lines and trees, the storage bin and its access track and loading areas, plus the material to be spread. Essentially this means that Super Air pilots are not allowed to fly if conditions are unsafe to do so."

The first of the new Super Air strips is located just outside Te Kuiti, servicing up to 30,000 hectares. Further strips are in development.

"One of the great benefits of the strips and bins that we are developing is that farmers are working with us in a shared cost structure," says Graeme. "By working collectively we are sharing industry expertise and ensuring pilot safety."

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