



Media release

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### **Ballance celebrates ten years in the South**

Ballance Agri-Nutrients is celebrating the tenth anniversary of the merger between Bay of Plenty Co-Operative Fertiliser Company and SouthFert.

Ballance Chief Executive Larry Bilodeau says that ten years ago Bay of Plenty Co-Operative Fertiliser (now Ballance) made some commitments to Lower South Island farmers as part of the merger, and he is delighted to be celebrating the achievement of those commitments at shed meetings in and around Southland this week.

'We promised SouthFert shareholders higher rebates, investment in the region, increased share value, membership to a stronger co-operative and an improved distribution network; and we have delivered on all of this,' says Mr Bilodeau.

'Average rebate returns to shareholders have been consistently high, and since 2002 have varied between \$18.58 and \$23.40. In April we announced that this year's average rebate and dividend would be a minimum of \$22 per qualifying tonne.'

Since 1997 Ballance has invested more than \$20 million in its Awarua plant in Invercargill, including \$8.5 million on upgrading the manufacturing plant and a further \$5 million on environmental improvements to the site. The manufacturing plant has had no environmental breaches in more than three years, and won the Environment Southland Corporate Environmental Award in 2005.

Former SouthFert shareholders now benefit from membership of a significantly stronger co-operative. In 1997, SouthFert had 5000 shareholders and approximately \$33 million equity. Today, Ballance has nearly 18,000 shareholders and \$275 million equity.

Mr Bilodeau says that Ballance has delivered on its promise of bringing quality plant nutrient products closer to the farm gate, with consignment stores either built or upgraded in the last ten years in Balclutha, Lumsden, Oturehua, Lawrence, Te Anau, Cromwell, Omakau and Owaka, and a service centre established in Gore.

'Our founding goal was to ensure the consistent supply of high-quality fertiliser at the most economic cost possible,' says Mr Bilodeau. 'While this is still our core focus, we also put considerable emphasis on helping farmers to take advantage of science, knowledge and technology to maximise production and minimise the impact their business has on the environment.'

Since 1997 Ballance has added to its technical representative team to ensure the provision of a timely service to customers – increasing numbers from 9 to 11 in the Lower South Island, and 0 to 8 in the Upper South Island.

Mr Bilodeau says that confidence in the future of agriculture internationally and domestically is strong at present, and Ballance is in a position and prepared to assist all farmers to meet any new environmental obligations related to fertiliser use.