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Peat moss replacement pilot completed

Peggy Steward

Capital Press Staff Writer

The results of a pilot project at a Rupert, Idaho, dairy could be of interest to operators of facilities with anaerobic digesters, or those who are considering installing them, the president of a Walla Walla, Wash., company said.

Organix Inc., Walla Walla, has developed a patented process, under the trademarked name FibeRite, that converts dairy solids from an anaerobic digester and turns it into a high-value, peat moss-like product, said Russ Davis, Organix president.

The product, trademarked RePeat, has generated interest from nurseries, landscapers, soil blenders and horticultural users looking for a locally-produced, environmentally-friendly product, Davis said. Natural peat moss is traditionally harvested from ancient bogs, many in Canada. It is a high-end soil amendment that can help hold nutrients and moisture.

A test of the new system was recently completed at the Whitesides Dairy biogas plant in Rupert, installed by Intrepid Technology and Resources Inc., Idaho Falls.

"This is the Swiss army knife of digesters," Davis said "It provides a variety of management tools."

With a surge in interest in renewable energy sources, biogas capture can help a dairy add a new income stream, while increasing the dairy's manure management strategies, Davis said.

In the RePeat manufacturing process, all of the material is kept in-vessel and above ground, the tanks can be moved and more tanks can be added, he said. And because it's kept in-vessel, odors and dust are reduced and the possibility of run-off is lessened. The new system can help dairies and other CAFOs faced with regulations on ammonia emissions, greenhouse gas releases and groundwater issues, Davis said.

Many dairymen, faced with the expense of an anaerobic digester system, have been looking for a higher-value product from the solids, and that's where RePeat can fit in, Davis said.

The peat moss substitute is higher value than standard compost produced from anaerobic digesters, making the entire process more economically viable for more dairies, Dennis Keiser, chief executive officer of Intrepid Technology & Resources Inc., said in a statement posted on the company's website. In the statement, Keiser estimated the peat moss replacement material could be three to five times more valuable than regular animal compost.

Davis said he already has letters of intent from a national company to purchase 100,000 yards of the RePeat product this year. He anticipates orders for more than 1 million yards by the end of 2007.

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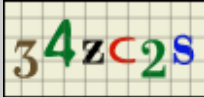
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