



For Immediate Release

May 18, 2011

Renewable Energy Opportunities, Challenges Identified for Dairy Industry

Center Hosts Meeting for Dairy Power Stakeholders

Harrisburg – Representatives from the public utility industry and environmental groups joined dairy producers and state officials to explore current and potential interest in dairy generated power and its obstacles, at a recent meeting hosted by the Center for Dairy Excellence in Harrisburg.

“On-farm biogas recovery presents a huge under-tapped resource of renewable energy for Pennsylvania,” said John Frey, Center for Dairy Excellence executive director. “Methane digesters offer the farm and local community very tangible benefits, including odor control, improved water and air quality, improved nutrient management, and the opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

As the nation’s fifth largest dairy state, Pennsylvania is home to 543,000 cows producing about 10.75 billion pounds of manure annually.

Pennsylvania has 15 biogas digesters, most of which are on dairy farms, that produced approximately 16.5 million kWh of energy in 2009, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in October 2010.

The EPA also showed only 157 biogas digester projects exist on U.S. livestock operations, but biogas recovery systems are technically feasible on more than 8,000 of the nation’s dairy and swine operations.

Cost is the greatest obstacle to building methane digesters on most farms, according to the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy. “According to the innovation center, a farm should have more than 500 cows to make the project economically feasible,” Frey said. “Our challenge in Pennsylvania is to make it possible for farms with more and less than 500 cows.”

Three dairy farm families that have incorporated digesters into their operations shared their perspectives, including Brubaker Farms in Lancaster County, Reinford Farms in Juanita County, and Schrack Dairy Farm in Clinton County. All three producers outlined opportunities and challenges they encountered in producing on-farm energy sources.

Representatives from PP&L Utilities, PennFutures and the Pennsylvania Utilities Commission discussed rate issues that impact renewable energy sources and how to address obstacles farms may encounter.

According to PennFutures, Pennsylvania has specific regulations pertaining to net metering that set standards on how electric utilities compensate customers that



generate their electricity. The group stressed understanding how net metering works is an important part of managing a self-generated energy system.

“Pennsylvania is home to the second largest number of dairy farms in the U.S.,” Frey said. “Finding ways to make methane digestion possible on more of these farms could have a very positive impact on individual farms, our industry as a whole and on the commonwealth’s ability to produce clean energy.”

For more information about the meeting, contact John Frey at 717-346-0849 or c-jfrey@state.pa.us.

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The Center for Dairy Excellence is a non-profit organization initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in 2004. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the center’s mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more about the center at www.centerfordairyexcellence.org.