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Contact:

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New energy initiative to generate power from dairy waste

Energy Trust can help farmers reduce energy costs, generate clean renewable energy

PORTLAND, Ore. — January 10, 2008 — Oregon's 320 dairy farms could become power generators through the Dairy Power Initiative from Energy Trust of Oregon. Dairy farms that install anaerobic digesters can receive cash incentives to turn manure into biogas, and generate climate-safe electricity. Energy Trust may also provide funding for feasibility studies.

"Installing anaerobic digesters offers many benefits for dairy farmers. Generating renewable power on dairies provides a good opportunity to build the urban-rural relationship, and it could allow dairy farmers to operate in some areas where urban development has encroached," said Jim Krahn, executive director, Oregon Dairy Farmers Association. "It's also important to support the development of sustainable energy resources and reduce use of fossil fuels in a way that is economically feasible."

Project calculator reduces complexity

Biomass electricity generation projects vary widely, making it complicated to calculate energy generation levels, project cost and incentive payments. To make it easier for dairy farmers to estimate what incentive might be available to them, Energy Trust has developed an on-line calculator tool. "The calculator can give a dairy a ballpark estimate of the funding available, based on the number of cows, the type of digester they're considering and the local electric utility," said Adam Serchuk, biopower program manager, Energy Trust.

To be eligible for a standard incentive, a digester project must be located on an Oregon dairy farm with a herd of at least 250 animals, use manure only from that farm and be owned by the dairy, not an outside investor. The power generated from the digester must be sold to the local utility. The digester should employ either standard complete-mix or plug-flow technology to create the biogas.

Energy Trust can fund other types of dairy projects as well, but the incentive will be calculated on a case-by-case basis. Interested dairies should contact Energy Trust to discuss their options.

All projects must be pre-approved to receive Energy Trust incentives. Existing projects are not eligible. As part of this initiative, Energy Trust is streamlining financial data required for the application to encourage broad participation.

Energy Trust typically funds renewable energy projects only within Portland General Electric or Pacific Power service territories, but the Dairy Power Initiative extends to other service territories. “The Dairy Power Initiative will demonstrate the potential for dairy digester technology and the most viable program approaches,” said Serchuk. “To make sure our first projects are the best possible demonstrations of this concept, we are open to proposals from anywhere in Oregon’s dairy country.”

The Dairy Power Initiative is sponsored by Energy Trust and managed cooperatively by Oregon Dairy Farmers Association (ODFA) and Oregon State University’s (OSU) Animal Sciences Department. ODFA and OSU representatives are working directly with dairy farmers to help them understand and design successful projects.

“We are able to help dairies evaluate their potential projects and learn how installing a digester will impact their manure management system,” said Mike Gamroth, professor, extension dairy specialist, Oregon State University. “Dairies may also need help in analyzing the financial arrangement for installing the digester, as well as their operational responsibilities.” Dairies interested in receiving expert guidance from ODFA or OSU may contact Gamroth, OSU, at 541-737-3316 or mike.gamroth@oregonstate.edu or Amanda Green, Renewable Energy Project Coordinator, ODFA, at 360-751-4190, or cloverun@hotmail.com.

Energy Trust offers several programs to help farmers and ranchers save energy and generate renewable power from their operations. The Production Efficiency program’s Small Industrial Initiative provides cash incentives for energy efficiency measures and the Small Wind program provides incentives for the installation of wind turbines of up to 50 kilowatts. Energy efficiency and renewable energy projects may also qualify for Oregon Business Energy Tax Credits through the Oregon Department of Energy.

Energy Trust of Oregon, Inc., is a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing how Oregonians use energy by promoting energy efficiency and clean renewable energy for Oregon customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural and Cascade Natural Gas. For more information, visit the Energy Trust website, www.energytrust.org, or call 1-866-368-7878.

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