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Michigan feed mill to turn turkey waste into energy

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PIERSON TOWNSHIP (AP) — A Montcalm County feed mill will install equipment for converting turkey manure into energy that it will use to produce livestock feed.



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Work on the new, \$3 million biomass operation at Sietsema Farms Feeds LLC in Pierson Township near Howard City is expected to begin by late August or early September, said company owner Harley Sietsema.

The equipment will generate steam and electricity from the waste of 1.1 million turkeys being raised at eight of his farms in Allendale, Coopersville, Fremont and Ravenna, said Norma McDonald, operating manager with Phase 3 Renewables in Cincinnati, which is working with Sietsema Farms Feeds on the project.

"It's just a matter of getting the most out of all your products and byproducts," Sietsema told The Daily News of Greenville for a story published Tuesday.

His farm operation is based in Allendale and has 38 associated farms within a 75-mile radius of the city.

Sietsema Farms Feeds, which he opened five years ago, produces 125,000 tons of livestock feed pellets per year. The pellets are made from corn, soybean meal, vitamins, nutrients and vegetable oil.

Sietsema started looking years ago for other uses for the turkey waste besides fertilizer. He discovered that large farm operations had started using a process called gasification to extract energy from animal waste.

In October, the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded Sietsema Farms Feeds a \$500,000 grant and a \$700,750 loan guarantee to construct the project.

Sietsema said he doesn't expect a profit from the new venture for three or four years but that should eventually change as energy costs continue to rise.

Sietsema Farms Feeds spends more than \$500,000 annually on natural gas and electricity. After meeting the mill's energy requirements, the excess electricity will be sold to a utility company.

Negotiations are under way with Spartan Renewable Energy, a recently formed division of the Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative in Cadillac, to purchase the excess power.