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Turkey Manure as Biomass for Feed Mill

US - A feed mill in Montcalm county, Michigan, is planning to install equipment for converting turkey manure from around West Michigan into energy to be used in the production of feed.

Muskagon Chronicle reports that work on the new, \$3 million biomass operation at Sietsema Farms Feeds LLC in Pierson Township near Howard City.

Work 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.

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

The Sietsema waste-to-energy plant is similar to the process being used at the den Dulk Dairy Farm in Ravenna. It began operation last year with a \$2.7 million bio-digester plant, which was a joint venture between the farm and Grand Valley State University's Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Center in Muskegon.

Mr Sietsema's turkey farm is based in Allendale and has 38 associated farms within a 75-mile radius of the city.

Sietsema Farms Feeds was set up five years ago. It produces 125,000 tons of livestock feed a year using corn, soybean meal, vitamins, nutrients and vegetable oil.

Years ago, Mr Sietsema began to look for uses for the turkey waste besides fertilizer, and he came across large farms using gasification to obtain energy from animal waste.

Last year, the US Department of Agriculture awarded Sietsema Farms Feeds a \$500,000 grant and a \$700,750 loan guarantee to construct the project.

Mr Sietsema does not expect the new venture to be profitable in the first three or four years but he predicts this will 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, concludes the Muskegon Chronicle report.

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