



NEWS RELEASE

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THESE TURKEYS FILL YOUR BELLY AND KEEP THE LIGHTS ON, TOO

EAST LANSING, MICH., Nov. 24, 2009 – Sietsma Farms in central Michigan sends more than a million turkeys a year to the dinner table. That's a lot of Thanksgiving feasts. A million turkeys also generate a lot of waste – on the order of 17,000 tons of litter per year.

Local farms are happy to use turkey droppings as fertilizer, but a little litter goes a long way, and transportation costs are high. In fact, it can cost as much as \$10 a ton just to get the droppings to mid-Michigan farms that can use it.

A million turkeys also need to eat. To feed all those birds, Sietsma Farms has its own mill that creates feed pellets, which is a very energy-intensive process.

Thanks to a \$500,000 grant and \$700,750 loan from USDA Rural Development's Renewable Energy program, part of the Farm Bill, Sietsma Farms has constructed a biomass renewable energy plant adjacent to its Howard City, Mich., facility. The plant will use the turkey litter to power the feed processing center. The energy plant will require 14,000 tons of litter per year to produce approximately 8,625 pounds of steam and 462 kW per hour.

It will draw upon the waste of five turkey operations within a 45-mile radius for its fuel, in effect turning a hazardous substance into a valuable one. As a result, there will be less pollution, less odors and more electricity for other users in the area. It is estimated the project will pay for itself in four years.

Not bad for a holiday dinner entrée.

The USDA funding mentioned above is from regular program funding and is not provided through the Recovery Act.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development fosters growth in homeownership, finances business development, and supports the creation of critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/bprogs.htm.

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