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## **Renewable Energy from Manure Becomes Reality for New York**

**Through dairy coalition, methane digesters to power 32,000 homes by 2020**

Rosemont, Ill. — Methane digesters on dairy farms could soon be a common source of energy for residents and businesses in the state of New York. That is one result of the Dairy Power Summit, held Oct. 29 and 30, 2009, in Syracuse, N.Y., which brought together more than 200 New York dairy farmers and industry stakeholders from across the country to discuss the potential for dairy-supplied renewable energy.

Summit attendees set a 2020 goal that 40 percent of all manure from New York dairy farms goes through the anaerobic digestion process, which captures methane from manure and generates clean, renewable energy. The energy produced from this effort could power 32,000 homes while strengthening the economic vitality of New York's dairy farms. It also would reduce New York's greenhouse gas emissions by 500,000 metric tons of carbon, equivalent to taking 100,000 cars off the road.

The Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, with sponsorship from GE Energy, coordinated the Dairy Power Summit in order to identify and act on opportunities to increase the economic viability and adoption rate of anaerobic digesters. Participants represented dairy farms; utilities; milk cooperatives; digester developers; financial institutions; academia; and local, state and federal governments.

"The Dairy Power Summit is an outstanding effort on the part of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy, as we try to reduce the methane emissions and enable farmers to use cleaner, renewable energy sources, and as we go forward in our attempt to green our environment, to green our economy, and also to create economic development for our farmers," said New York Gov. David A. Paterson in a video address to summit attendees.

Gov. Paterson's "45 by 15" program is one of the nation's most aggressive energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. By 2015, New York State will meet 45 percent of its electricity needs through improved energy efficiency (15 percent) and clean renewable energy, such as methane (30 percent). This goal is in line with the commitment of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy to reduce industrywide greenhouse gas emissions associated with fluid milk by 25 percent by 2020.

"The innovative technologies being pursued can benefit dairy farms of all sizes as well as our communities," said Thomas P. Gallagher, chief executive officer of the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy

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## ***Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy — Page 2***

and Dairy Management Inc.™ (DMI), which manages the national dairy checkoff program on behalf of the nation's dairy farmers.

Attendees of the summit collaborated to develop an action plan made up of more than a dozen projects. Some of the projects include:

- American Agricultural Biogas Coalition — Form a nationwide, cross-industry alliance to provide a unified voice promoting renewable, sustainable biogas solutions. This new organization would advocate at the local, state and national levels.
- Small-Farm Digester Initiative — Host an innovation contest that would award \$1 million toward the development of a digester system for a smaller-scale farm with between two and 200 cows.
- NY Cow Power — Develop a voluntary rate-payer program to enable electric consumers to support anaerobic digesters (e.g., residential or commercial customers pay 4 cents per kWh extra on utility bills to help fund digesters). This program would be modeled on the successful program of Central Vermont Public Service, [www.cvps.com/cowpower](http://www.cvps.com/cowpower).
- Digester Implementation Project — Collaborate with 20 farms to issue a joint request for proposal to install 20 digesters. This will reduce the cost and complexity that farmers could experience individually.
- Model Community Digester System — Develop a best-in-class model for a community digester. Projects will be explored in Lowville, N.Y., and potentially near Skaneateles, N.Y.
- Rolling Biogas — Research opportunities to clean and compress biogas for use as natural gas in vehicles, a viable alternative to diesel fuel.

Attendees of the summit have formed project teams to refine the ideas and work toward the first milestones. These efforts will increase the availability of energy and fuel from methane digesters while strengthening the role of farms within their regions.

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Patrick Hooker said, “The action items developed by the many stakeholders at the Dairy Power Summit will ensure that our dairy farms and rural communities will play an active role in New York’s cleaner and greener environment. The future is bright for on-farm generation of renewable energy, and I look forward to assisting the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy in achieving the goals set at the summit.”

While the summit primarily focused on anaerobic digester opportunities in the state of New York, these pilot projects could lead to solutions for farms and communities across the country.

“We envision a possible future made up of bioenergy communities, where farms produce the majority of the locally consumed food and energy; conserve water, habitat and open space; and provide recreational and educational opportunities to the local community and beyond,” said Skip Hardie, one of the owners of Hardie Farms in Lansing, N.Y. “As the heart of the community, farms are creating jobs, enhancing the environment and improving quality of life.”

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### ***Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy — Page 3***

***Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy*** provides a forum for the dairy industry to work pre-competitively to address barriers to and opportunities for innovation and sales growth. The Innovation Center aligns the collective resources of the industry to offer consumers nutritious dairy products and ingredients, and promote the health of people, communities, the planet and the industry. The Board of Directors for the Innovation Center represents leaders of more than 30 key U.S. producer organizations, dairy cooperatives, processors, manufacturers and brands. The Innovation Center is supported and staffed by Dairy Management Inc.™ For more information, contact [innovationcenter@usdairy.com](mailto:innovationcenter@usdairy.com) or visit [USDairy.com](http://USDairy.com).

#### **Addendum: Representative Participants in the Dairy Power Summit**

**Dairy farmers:** Hardie Farms, Sunnyside Farm, Spruce Haven Farm, Patterson Farms

**Utility companies:** National Grid, NYSEG

**Milk cooperatives:** Dairylea Cooperative, Inc.; Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc.; Agri-Mark, Inc.; Dairy Farmers of America, Inc.

**Digester developers:** RCM, GHD

**Technology provider:** GE Energy Jenbacher Gas Engines

**Government Representatives:** Office of New York Gov. David Paterson, Office of U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of New York Sen. Darrel Aubertine, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency AgSTAR Program

**Financial institutions and investors:** Farm Credit, Shell Energy

**Academia:** Cornell University PRO-DAIRY, Cornell Cooperative Extension, SUNY-Morrisville, SUNY-Environmental Science and Forestry, University of Florida