

Meet An Anaerobic Digester Operator

IDEAL FAMILY FARMS, LLC.
Beavertown, Pennsylvania

Let's Meet...

Dennis Brubaker, Member/Partner

Anaerobic Digester Type: Complete Mix

Operating Since: July 2011



Why did you build a digester?

Our swine farm consists of a 4,400 head nursery and 10,350 finishing spaces. Manure disposal and energy costs made up a large part of our on-farm operating expenses. When energy costs spiked in 2008, we knew we had to gain more control over our highest operating costs. We looked at wind, solar and digesters. The digester allowed us to generate 2.5 times our on-farm electric needs and offset 50% of our heating costs. It was the most beneficial option.

What are the challenges for your system?

Our system was designed to handle approximately 50% more feedstock than our farm produces because we anticipated receiving outside food waste products to maximize capacity. However, we have not been able to make the right connections with food waste sources and are operating at partial system capacity.

What is the biggest benefit for your operating project?

We found a way to dispose of 7 million gallons of manure annually and achieve tremendous cost savings. We added revenue to the farm through energy savings and sale of excess electricity, and are also able to use the waste heat to heat our nursery barn. Our neighbors are happy too; they reported a reduction in odors after the digester was installed.

Any advice for those seeking to build a system?

- Allow adequate time. Our process took about three years from research to operation.
- Do your research and visit existing systems if possible. This will help you decide on a specific design that will work for your needs.
- Work with reputable companies who can offer assistance and support from start to finish to make the process much smoother.



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