

# Electrifying idea: Using cow dung

By John Vidal, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.01.16

Word Count **413**



Matthew Freund's 225 dairy cows produce the raw product and energy required to make a biodegradable fiber pot on Freund's farm in East Caanan, Connecticut. They are pictured here on July 29, 2004. Photo: AP Photo/Jessica Hill

At a farm in north Wales, electricity is generated from the waste of hundreds of cattle, chickens and a nearby food factory. Sound yucky? The mixture is actually pretty good stuff.

Lodge Farm has made electricity and heat for its farmhouse since 2011 by turning waste into power. It also makes power for an engineering factory and up to 100 homes. The farm is organic. This means it does not use chemicals.

But farmer Richard Tomlinson says his job is not to run a power station. "My job is to grow food," he says.

Making power from farm and food waste is good for the earth, Tomlinson says. The United Kingdom produces nearly 110 million tons of natural waste a year. About 90 million tons come from farms and about 10 million tons come from food waste. Almost all of it still goes into landfill.

## **What A Waste**

Tomlinson explains that it doesn't make sense for the waste to be dumped in a landfill because it can be changed into electricity. Tomlinson and his brother designed and built eight other plants to change farm waste into electricity.

Many of the U.K.'s 208 plants that need food waste to make power also mean farms aren't growing as much food. It takes more farm waste to make fuel than it takes for other crops to make fuel. So, many farmers have turned their fields into maize (corn) to make power rather than grow food.

In the U.K., businesses spend a lot of money every year to dump waste in landfills. This could be avoided.

## **Feed It To The Pigs**

The best possible plan for anything that cannot be used to feed animals or people is to turn it into power, says Tristram Stuart. He set up a group to help lower the amount of food waste. For example, Stuart says it's up to 500 times better to feed food waste to pigs rather than use it to make power. He would like to see all food waste not fit for humans fed to animals. "Pigs eat our waste, we eat pigs."

The U.K. must do something with its food waste, experts say.

"We throw a shocking amount of food waste into landfill because we have not collected it and treated it separately," says Fergus Healy. He works at the energy company Olleco. Collecting food waste will help the U.K. meet almost half of its recycling goal for 2020. These efforts will help the whole world.

## Quiz

- 1 Select the sentence from the section "What A Waste" that explains why many farmers have changed what they grow.
- (A) Tomlinson explains it doesn't make sense for the waste to be dumped in a landfill because it could be changed into electricity.
  - (B) Tomlinson and his brother designed and built eight other plants to change farm waste into electricity.
  - (C) It takes more farm waste to make fuel than it takes for other crops to make fuel.
  - (D) In the U.K., businesses spend a lot of money every year to dump waste in landfills.
- 2 Which sentence from the section "Feed It To The Pigs" suggests that there is more than one way to use food waste?
- (A) He set up a group to help lower the amount of food waste.
  - (B) For example, Stuart says it's up to 500 times better to feed food waste to pigs rather than use it to make power.
  - (C) The U.K. must do something with its food waste, experts say.
  - (D) Collecting food waste will help the U.K. meet almost half of its recycling goal for 2020.
- 3 What are the two main ideas of the article?
- (A) An organic farm is beginning to turn farm and food waste into power. Organic farms do not use chemicals on their crops.
  - (B) People are beginning to turn farm and food waste into power. Using waste instead of throwing it away is good for the Earth.
  - (C) Some people think food waste should be turned into electricity. Others think it makes more sense to continue dumping waste into landfills.
  - (D) Farms are starting to grow less food so they can make power instead. The U.K. has a recycling goal for the year 2020.
- 4 What is the MAIN goal of Tristram Stuart?
- (A) to get people and animals to eat feed food
  - (B) to get people to use food waste as energy
  - (C) to get people to throw farm waste into landfills
  - (D) to get people to turn farm waste into food

## Answer Key

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