



## RASE LAUNCHES ANAEROBIC DIGESTION REPORT

Small-scale on-farm anaerobic digestion (AD) plants can provide a solution to the 90m tonnes of slurry and manure produced annually on UK livestock farms.

A new report, based on case-study experience from 14 existing UK AD installations, sees the technology as capable not only of reducing the farming industry's current green house gas (GHG) emissions but also providing a source of valuable fertilizer and renewable energy.

These are the key findings of the report, "*A Review of Anaerobic Digestion Plants on UK Farms - Barriers, Benefits & Case Studies*" commissioned by the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) and launched on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2011. The farms cited in the report have used the technology successfully over the past ten to twenty years.

Report author, renewable energy consultant Angie Bywater, said:

"All of the farmers in the case studies lauded the benefits of AD which include a decreased or nil reliance on fossil based fertilizer, significant odour reduction, vastly decreased potential for watercourse pollution from run-off, fewer emissions to air, increased nutrient uptake, reduction in pathogens, fewer weeds and decreased reliance on fossil fuel heating."

However the report questions whether the current Government's drivers and incentives are sufficient and appropriate to ensure uptake of the technology at all scales, and especially at typical UK farm sizes. Ms Bywater argues that the incentives on offer to farmers considering an AD installation - the Feed-In-Tariff (FiT) and Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) - are too focused on encouraging farmers to create renewable energy and put too little emphasis on encouraging the alternative use and treatment of slurry.

The report makes the case that for Government and the agricultural industry, AD technology is the ideal way in which to treat slurry. A recent official Defra report made an argument for up to 1,000 on-farm digesters by 2020.

Ms Bywater says that, if we are to achieve such numbers, a range of important barriers need first to be overcome. These include access to finance from a money market unfamiliar with the technology, planning policy open to subjective and ambiguous interpretation and a plethora of growing and changing legislation applied differently in every case.

The report makes a number of key recommendations on which it hopes Government will take action. These include more advantageous FiT and incremental tariff bands, access to grants such as the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), rolling loan programmes with preferential terms with options of lower interest rates and initial payment holidays funded through current environmental taxes, establishing a lighter regulatory touch, a more holistic approach to feedstock management and the establishment of a single, definitive point for information and regulation.

Welcoming the report on behalf of the RASE, Chief Executive Denis Chamberlain said:

“This is a very timely piece of work which should be essential reading for policy makers and advisors as well as any livestock farming business seeking an environmentally-friendly, effective and economical way of handling slurry. RASE will now be looking for ways to take this debate forward, with other industry partners, to a very practical phase which will seek to add to the number of AD plants on UK farms.”

**-ENDS-**

Notes to Editors:-

Since 1838, the Royal Agricultural Society of England has played a leading role in the development of British agriculture and a vibrant rural economy through the uptake of good science and the promotion of best practice. Its “Practice with Science” Group advises the Society Executive and commissions reports on issues of strategic importance.

[www.rase.org.uk/what-we-do-/core-purpose-agricultural-work/index.asp](http://www.rase.org.uk/what-we-do-/core-purpose-agricultural-work/index.asp)

Report author Angela Bywater became interested in anaerobic digestion when she project managed the construction of a digester and other building works in early 2001. Over the last decade, she has maintained an interest in the technology and has been involved in a number of AD-related projects and publications. She is currently focussing on small farm and micro-AD technologies.

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