

Project to Turn Hog Waste into Energy

JIM SALTER, Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Developers of a renewable biogas project in remote north-central Missouri are hoping to turn hog manure into energy.

Murphy-Brown of Missouri LLC is teaming up with Roeslein Alternative Energy LLC on the project near Princeton, Mo., a small town in one of the most sparsely populated areas of the state. Plans, announced Wednesday, call for construction of the \$100 million project to begin in April.

Murphy-Brown, a subsidiary of Virginia-based Smithfield Foods, is the world's largest pork producer. All those hogs create plenty of waste that developers say can be turned into a renewable energy source. The project will also help eliminate some of the waste odor, they said, which frequently draws complaints from those living near corporate hog farms.

"Not only does it demonstrate our ongoing commitment to the environment and to our neighbors, but it also allows us to make facility upgrades that are good for our employees, our animals and the continuous improvement of our business in northern Missouri," Murphy-Brown of Missouri General Manager Michael Rainwater said in a statement.

Murphy-Brown operates hog farms in 12 states. It is already among the biggest employers in north-central Missouri, with about 1,100 workers. The company did not say how many additional jobs could be created by the biogas project.

Biogas, also called renewable natural gas, is created when organic matter decomposes without oxygen present. Developers of the project will harvest biogas from Murphy-Brown finishing farms, using technology developed and installed by Roeslein Alternative Energy.

The process, organizers say, will work like this: Murphy-Brown will scrape manure into existing lagoons that will be covered to reduce odors and control water flow into them. There, the waste will decompose and produce gas. Alternative fuel equipment will harvest and commercialize the biogas.

"We expect to achieve reduced greenhouse gas emissions, shrink MBM's carbon footprint, eliminate rainfall effects on treatment systems, all while capturing a valuable and renewable biogas energy resource," Roeslein Alternative Energy President Rudi Roeslein said in a statement.

Stern Brothers & Co. is underwriting financing for project, but officials may also seek funding through a Missouri clean energy program, Murphy-Brown said in a news release. Smithfield Foods and Murphy-Brown are not providing funding for the project.

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