Agri Beef Opens New Biogas Plant

Agri Beef Co., producer of the premium Northwest beef brands Snake River Farms, Double R Ranch and St. Helens, continues to deploy technology reducing its environmental footprint. Washington Beef (the company's beef processing facility) has built a new biogas plant which captures methane from an anaerobic lagoon which is part of the plant's water treatment system. The biogas is used in the company’s steam boilers displacing nearly 20 percent of the facility’s natural gas needs.

“Agri Beef has a strong commitment to sustainability and good corporate citizenship,” said Jay Theiler, Director of Marketing, “so we didn’t need a lot of convincing to implement this project. The biogas plant is a win-win-win: it’s sustainable, it helps with odor abatement and it provides energy value.”

All Agri Beef operations are guided by the company’s STAR Commitment, a focus on the fundamental principles of sustainability, total quality, animal well-being and responsible business practices. Agri Beef has consistently been at the forefront of environmental stewardship and sustainability, as the company strongly believes in productively using the natural resources in a way that is sustainable over the long run.

About the project

Agri Beef purchased Washington Beef in 2003 and almost immediately began making plans to make substantial investments in strategic areas in and around the plant. One area identified for improvement was water conservation and the water treatment system. As with any food processing operation, Washington Beef uses water for food safety systems, equipment sterilization, steam and cooling systems, among other beneficial uses. Through a focused effort by the employees the water used per pound of beef produced has been reduced by over 40 percent.

A critical part of the water treatment system is anearobic lagoons which naturally create methane as the organic matter is broken down. Methane, if properly captured and processed can become a valuable substitute for natural gas. In order to make use of this resource the company completely redesigned the water treatment lagoon adding below ground vents while trapping the gasses under a specially designed cover that encapsulates the lagoon. The captured gas is then pushed through a series of pressurized containers and storage system eventually being burned in the plant's boilers.

Although at today's low natural gas prices the return on investment occurs over an extended period of time, Agri Beef views this as a long-term sustainability decision that is both a benefit to the environment and a good economic decision for the company.

Robert Rebholtz Sr. founded Agri Beef Co. in 1968 in Boise, Idaho, as a family-owned ranching and cattle feeding operation. The company has since grown to incorporate every step of beef production, from ranching, cattle feeding and animal nutrition to beef processing, marketing and sales. Agri Beef Co.'s sustainable beef production model coordinates the efforts of all its business operations to responsibly produce the highest-quality meat products. The company's operations are guided by the fundamental principles of sustainability, total quality, animal well-being and responsible business (known as the company's STAR Commitment). For more information, visit www.agribeef.com *[1].*

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