

Penn State

Poultry Pointers



Agricultural & Biological Engineering

Agricultural Economics

COMPOSTING POULTRY MANURE

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Composting poultry manure can be a viable option for poultry producers who are looking for ways to improve their manure marketing opportunities.

However, a number of advantages and disadvantages need to be considered before one chooses composting over direct marketing or utilization of fresh manure.

One of the primary benefits of composting is that it produces a saleable product with markets that would not be available for fresh manure. Potential buyers include the turf industry, landscapers, homeowners, highway and park

departments, and agricultural crop producers.

Since the weight, volume, and moisture content of manure is reduced during the composting process, manure handling is improved. Properly produced compost stores well without fly or odor problems.

Weed seeds and pathogens are destroyed during the composting process. Nitrogen in the manure is converted to more stable organic forms during the composting process which is less susceptible to leaching and further ammonia loss. Some of the nitrogen is lost during this process, however.

Compost has excellent soil conditioning properties. When applied to soil, it improves soil structure and adds organic matter. The use of compost has been found to reduce soil-borne plant diseases

without the use of chemical controls. Although this is not well understood this is beginning to be widely recognized.

Finally, farmers who use leaves or grass clippings in their composting operations may be able to collect tipping fees from the municipalities who divert these products from the waste stream.

Composting does have significant disadvantages as well which must be carefully considered. First, composting requires a significant amount of time, equipment, and management skill. Equipment costs will vary greatly depending on the system chosen. One may be able to get started using only a front end loader and a manure spreader to form windrows which may already be available on the farm. However, a sophisticated system may cost several hundred thousand dollars.

Regardless of the system utilized, a major time commitment will be required to manage the system. Although a properly produced finished product should be relatively odor free, there will certainly be odors produced during the composting process.

This makes it important that the compost site be at a significant distance from neighbors. The site must be carefully designed and managed to prevent runoff. The

composting area, storage for raw manure, and storage for the finished product may take a large amount of land area or building space.

Marketing compost successfully requires special skills and interests which are different than the skills required to produce eggs or broilers. Many times, producers of eggs or broilers are not directly involved in the marketing of these products. However, to successfully market compost, one must be aggressive in pursuing a niche market. This involves making phone calls, personally visiting

potential clients with a sample product, and making additional follow-up calls and visits. One may also need to work with clients in developing recommendations for use of product in specific niches such as the turf industry or the horticultural container industry.

Composting has potential for increasing markets for poultry manure. However, many factors need to be considered carefully when evaluating this decision. It will be a good option for some operations but certainly not for all.

Soybean Farmers Disappointed Over Oilseeds Dispute

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — U.S. and European Community (EC) officials have reached an agreement in the five-year-old dispute over EC oilseed subsidies.

U.S. oilseed producers are obviously disappointed with and deeply concerned by the level of oilseed production the agreement will permit within the European

Community (EC). This level is well above any position supported or endorsed by any U.S. farm group.

ASA President and Florida soybean farmer Steve Yoder said the agreement will not achieve the goal of the U.S. Section 301 complaint filed by ASA in 1987 to open the EC market to exports of competitively-priced U.S. oilseeds and oilseed products.

"U.S. soybean farmers will continue to suffer the loss of a \$2 billion market in the EC, and will receive no compensation for this loss," Yoder said. "Beyond these major shortcomings, though, the agreement has the potential of gradually slowing and possibly reversing current trade-distorting trends in EC oilseed production."

The pact will limit the maximum area on which payments are made to stimulate surplus EC oilseed production, both for food and industrial purposes. Within the area restricted for food production, it will establish a permanent 10 percent set-aside.

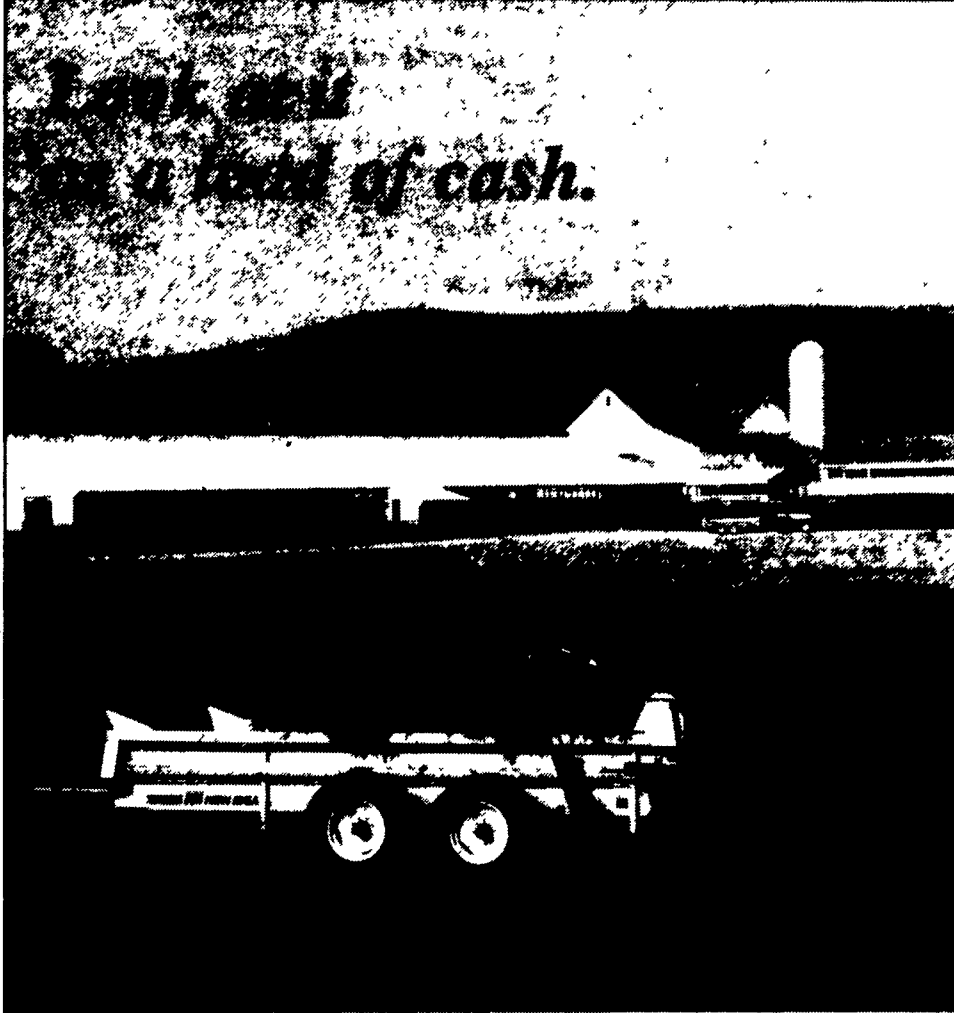
"We see this as an important first step toward curbing subsidized EC oilseed production and exports over the long term," said Yoder. "Again, the differences between the terms of this agreement and ASA's well-known position on the 301 case are clear. However, we recognize that even the limited constraint the agreement will impose on EC oilseed production would not have been possible without the strong support and efforts of Secretary Ed Madigan and his team at USDA. We also deeply appreciate and will continue to seek the views and guidance of many members of Congress who have stood beside ASA through these long and difficult negotiations."

The oilseeds dispute stemmed from the U.S. charges that the EC had nullified and impaired its 1962 duty-free commitment for soybeans and soy meal by offering lucrative subsidies to growers and processors of EC-origin oilseeds at the expense of U.S. soybean exports. A GATT Dispute Settlement Panel twice ruled in favor of the U.S. position.

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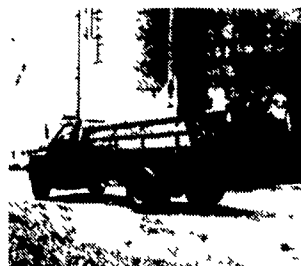


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