



# What's New in Economics?

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***“Good environmentalism is good economics.”  
-Barber Conable,  
President of The World Bank***



## ***“Environmental Impacts and Economic Comparison of Alternative Dairy Systems”***

The publication “Environmental Impacts and Economic Comparison of Alternative Dairy Systems” is a publication of the Minnesota Project, NRCS, The College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences at the University of Minnesota, and the University of Minnesota Extension Service. Included in the publication are three fact sheets:

- ❖ “Effects of Digested Dairy Manure on Nutrients and Soil Quality”
- ❖ “Weed Seed Survival in Anaerobic Digesters” and
- ❖ “Profits from Manure Power? Economic Analysis of the Haubenschild Farms Anaerobic Digester.”

All three fact sheets include information from Haubenschild Farms’ Anaerobic Digester, which was installed in 1999. They installed a heated plug-flow digester with a 130 kilowatt engine/generator to utilize bio-gas.

The economic analysis is of interest, especially when comparing the costs and returns of the Haubenschild’s digester to other proposed digesters. The authors of the fact sheet conclude that the performance of the digester to date looks profitable and the profitability can be attributed to the detailed and motivated manager and favorable electricity pricing by the local utility. The profitability is also attributed to the financial assistance from several government agencies. They conclude that an electricity price of 8 to 10 cents per kilowatt hour (kwh) would be required to make a digester like the Haubenschild Farms’ digester a profitable investment. They do state that, if the digester is subsidized or provides additional benefits to the operation, the electricity price needed for profitability could be less than 8 to 10 cents per kwh. The above information and additional information can be found at the following website:

<http://www.mnproject.org/> (under Energy, Farm-based Energy, Haubenschild Digester)

#### FACTS:

- ❖ Hennepin County, Minnesota is the 32<sup>nd</sup> largest county in United States.
- ❖ 6 Minnesota counties are included in the 100 fastest growing U.S. counties with 10,000 or more population in 2004. This is based population estimates from April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004.

<http://www.census.gov/popest/estimates.php>

## ***Population Loss in the Great Plains, Corn Belt, and Appalachia***

The Economic Research Service (ERS) published in *Amber Waves* in Volume 3, Issue 2 the article, "Population Loss Counties Lack Natural Amenities and Metro Proximity." Population loss counties are those counties that lost population in both the 1980's and the 1990's, according to ERS. According to the article, of the 2,052 nonmetro counties in the US, more than 25% are classified as population loss counties. North Dakota has experienced the most widespread outmigration than any other state in the United States. All but three of North Dakota's nonmetro counties saw a loss in population. Minnesota has seen most of its population loss in counties in southwest Minnesota and along the South Dakota and North Dakota border. There was some population loss in the north central portion of the state. More information can be found at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/> or [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

## ***Useful Websites***

There are a number of useful economics websites offering information regarding agriculture and conservation. In each newsletter, I will highlight one or two of my favorites.

- <http://www.census.gov/> - This is the link to the Census Bureau's website. All the information you need about the 2000 Census and historical data is available on this website.
- <http://attra.ncat.org/> - ATTRA is the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, funded by the USDA, is managed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology. ATTRA provides information and other technical assistance to farmers, ranchers, Extension agents, educators, and others involved in sustainable agriculture in the United States.

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