

12,000 digesters in Europe prove it:

Biogas is one of the most reliable and versatile renewable energy sources

(Reaction to the article published by Dossier Journalistiek)

Production and use of biogas is steadily growing. Currently there are more than 12 000 biogas plants operated in Europe, over 8,000 alone in Germany. Thanks to the continuous education by national associations across Europe providing biogas producers with valuable opportunities for training and exchange of information on technical matters and legal framework, very little accidents are happening. National associations can thus help to prevent risks and environmental damage which result from unawareness among farmers. Quality assurance systems like in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, etc. guarantee that the effluent of the digester – the so called digestate – is an excellent fertilizer of high quality. The application of digestate closes nutrient cycles in regional ecosystems. One kilogram of mineral nitrogen fertilizer saves over six kilograms of CO₂ which would be released by the production of the mineral fertilizer. Assuming an average farm of 30 hectares, every biogas farmer can save up to 30 tons of CO₂ by using 170 kg nitrogen in form of digestate.

The European Biogas Association (EBA) takes regrettably note of the accidents that happened in The Netherlands but does not support the generalized critical reporting on consequences of biogas production in the Netherlands. Production of biogas is strictly regulated at the European and national levels in order to be as sustainable as possible. The EU is currently harmonising the different regulations on fertilisers in European member states. Sustainable production and use of biogas contributes to Europe's GHG emissions saving target, creates green jobs in the countryside and reduces the impact of the volatility of food prices in farm incomes. Biogas is a versatile source of energy that can be produced anywhere in Europe from organic materials including left over from kitchen and organic municipal wastes, creating security of supply and locally produced energy for heat, electricity and transport purposes.

Holland has a long tradition of biogas production and excellent centres of higher education as key examples the Universities of Wageningen (Prof. Zeeman) and the Technical University of Delft (Prof. van Lier). In order to improve safe and sustainable production of biogas, there is also a need for strong national biogas associations acting as intermediate between legislators, universities and plant operators.

For details about the biogas activities in the various EU member states as coordinated by EBA look at www.european-biogas.eu.