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Cow-powered truck unveiled at World Ag Expo in Calif.

Cecilia Parsons
Capital Press

TULARE, Calif. - Lindsay, Calif., dairy producer Rob Hilarides didn't want his waste to go to waste so he figured out a way to turn it into power.

Hilarides and his family unveiled the nation's first "cow powered" milk truck Wednesday at the World Ag Expo in Tulare. The truck, converted from diesel to biomethane, is used to deliver milk tankers twice daily to Hilmar Cheese Co. in Hilmar, Calif.

Hilarides, one of the first dairymen to convert methane into electricity on his dairy, has covered more of his dairy lagoons to capture gas. He said he plans to convert as many of his dairy vehicles as possible to run on the biomethane.

The project became possible through a public-private partnership aimed at developing a replacement for diesel fuel. Generated from renewable sources, the fuel produces fewer emissions than diesel, said Allen Dusault of Sustainable Conservation.

No figures were available for the actual cost of producing the biomethane.

Hilarides said the truck's mileage is comparable to diesel - about six miles per gallon. One of the few limiting factors for the conversion is the volume of the gas. Hilarides had to put extra tanks on the trucks to hold enough biomethane for the 270-mile trips to Hilmar.

"The process of harvesting the gas is simple, it's the details that mess up the project," Hilarides said. "Regulatory hurdles are immense. If you're not willing to jump into this, it will drive you nuts."

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Rob Hilarides of Hilarides Dairy in Lindsay, Calif., listens to the engine of his truck, which was converted from diesel to run on biomethane, on Wednesday, Feb. 11, at the World Ag Expo in Tulare, Calif. The biomethane gas was produced from dairy waste at his farm. Photo by Cecilia Parsons/Capital Press

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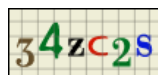
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