

ECN Session at the Nordic Biogas Conference 2019 in Oslo

Biofertilizer / Digestate: Securing the Whole Value Chain

On the occasion of the 7th Nordic Biogas Conference, which took place from 9 to 11 April 2019 in Oslo, the European Compost Network (ECN) organised the session on 'Biofertilizer/Digestate: Securing the whole value chain - How to turn digestate from a cost to an asset?'. The session was moderated by the former Chair of ECN, Henrik Lystad from Avfall Norge and speakers from the German Biogas Association (Fachverband Biogas), the Swedish Waste Association (Avfall Sverige) and the Italian Composting and Biogas Association (CIC) presented how it is necessary to ensure the quality of the digestate to achieve favourable market conditions across Europe.

Stefanie Siebert, Executive Director of the European Compost Network introduced the session by giving an overview on digestate production from bio-waste, the impact of the new European Fertilising Regulation and the role of quality assurance in Europe. ECN's objectives for implementing sustainable bio-waste treatment in Europe with the aim to produce high quality compost and digestate are to

1. Achieve a favourable EU legal framework
2. Achieve favourable market conditions across Europe
3. Achieve Europe wide implementation quality assurance schemes with ECN-QAS as a benchmark



These objectives are all related and addressed in the EU Circular Economy: the potential of bio-waste for composting and anaerobic digestion in Europe is high. To date, still 60Mt of bio-waste is landfilled or incinerated every year. With the obligation to introduce the separate collection of bio-waste in all member states by 2023 (revised EU Waste Framework Directive came into force on 4 July 2018) the way is paved to make a circular bioeconomy happen in Europe. In conjunction to this, the revision of the EU Fertilising Regulation (provisional agreement by the European Parliament on 27 March 2019) would create a harmonized market for EU certified organic fertilisers, soil improvers and growing media based on recycled organic materials. For that the quality assurance is a pre-condition for placing compost- or digestate-based fertilising products on the European Market.

Florian Strippel, Fachverband Biogas, introduced the characteristics, application possibilities and current markets of liquid or solid fraction of digestate. Furthermore, he presented several technical options to diversify the digestate:

- **Separation:** Mechanical separation of the digestate into a liquid and solid fraction
- **Drying:** Goal is to produce dried digestate by evaporation and enter new sales areas such as gardening
- **Pelletising:** Further upgrading of the dried digestate, easy to use for end customers because of their cleanliness

Caroline Steinwig, Avfall Sverige, talked about the Swedish QAS "Certified Re-use" and current production of digestate in Sweden. She explained that the Swedish Government will increase the production and consumption of organically certified food:

- The Government's target is that **30%** of the Swedish agricultural land should be certified organic farmland by 2030
- **60%** of public food consumption shall consist of certified organic products in 2030

For that, the certification of digestate as a biological fertilizer would be an interesting opportunity and a big step towards achieving the objectives set.

Alberto Confalonieri, Italian Composting and Biogas Association, presented the current situation regarding the quality, the collection and treatment of bio-waste in Italy. Their wish perspective is to "close the loops" by combining anaerobic digestion with post-composting. The aim is to produce biofuel for the use in collection vehicles and to produce high quality compost to be used as organic fertilizers and soil improver.

For that, the perspectives are:

- Increase recycling targets (including specific provisions for biowaste)
- Increase recycling facilities (expected growth of AD with biomethane production)

Overall the session gave a good overview about the state of the art of different anaerobic digestion techniques for using digestate in a sustainable way.

The presentations of the session can be downloaded here: