Expanding the RENURE framework to include thin fractions from digestate: a positive development, though focus on goals and not on techniques

The Dutch knowledge center for Manure Valorization (NCM) sees the EC's proposal to extend the RENURE rules to certain types of liquid digestate derived from livestock manure as a positive development. This confirms our conviction that, by using production techniques other than the three currently permitted for the production of RENURE, it is possible to reuse nutrients in a more practical and sustainable manner – with lower nitrogen losses (both ammonia and nitrate leaching or denitrification). More flexibility in RENURE production offers solutions for both farms capable of utilizing RENURE themselves (small-scale nutrient cycles) as for optimizing nutrients in RENURE on regional and international scale (reuse RENURE in livestock-dense regions and transport of organic matter and phosphate to arable regions). It is entirely feasible—without restricting RENURE to just a few specific techniques—to ensure that the production, storage, transport, and use of these materials are managed in a way that guarantees quality, volumes, and sustainability.

However, restricting this development to just one technique, a decanter/centrifuge, limits new innovations that are able to produce RENURE more efficient and with a lower footprint. Expanding on this approach, RENURE should become fully technology-neutral in an optimal scenario. Meeting the RENURE-criteria is very important, but for the technique used should be freedom of choice.

Other techniques to separate digestate and manure are already available and used in practice. For instance a belt press sieve, which is used by many manure/digestate processors. With this separation technique, these processors are capable to produce RENURE-products with a lower footprint on one side and to produce a high value organic solid fraction on the other side. The destination of especially this solid fractions form digestate/manure are arable areas with a soil nutrient deficiency. These practices are supported by the Fertiliser Action Plan of the European Commission, which states that Europe’s dependency on imports should be reduced. One of the suggested approaches is to make greater use of organic fertilizers. So, in a combination with a sieve belt press (and the use of flocculants) it is possible to produce better and more sustainable manure products (both RENURE and solid fraction).

In addition, there are other examples of techniques that can produce fertilizers meeting the RENURE criteria. NCM encourages the European Commission to further investigate where the expansion of techniques for producing RENURE is possible. This could include, for example, urine streams from new stable systems (featuring daily manure removal) that

result in lower ammonia and greenhouse gas emissions from livestock. In our view, the RENURE framework should ideally be technology-neutral, without compromising sustainability or the assurance that production and use are carried out correctly.

About NCM

The Foundation 'Dutch Center for Manure Valorization' (NCM) is the Dutch knowledge center in the field of manure and the processing and valorization of manure. NCM functions as the central point of contact for people from different backgrounds such as businesses, governments, knowledge institutions and social organizations. This creates a better shared knowledge base and vision, and better collaborations and initiatives. Moreover, it contributes to strong, circular and environmentally friendly agriculture.

NCM is an independently positioned foundation with its own board and supervisory board. Financing is provided by subsidies and donations (without compensation) from regional and national governments and the agricultural business community.

For further information please contact:
Jan Roefs MSc MBA, director
Email: jan.roefs@mestverwaarding.nl
Phone: +31 6 51 013 712
www.mestverwaarding.nl