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ALTERNATIVE USES FOR MANURE

*Realizing the Value in
An Abundant Resource*

As our livestock producers face increasingly stringent laws, regulations and societal pressures regarding the land application of manure and other agricultural by-products, the question arises: "what do farmers do with manure they can no longer apply to the land?"

Manure is a valuable nutrient source. Nutrient management is vital to achieving optimum crop yields and reducing the risk of adversely affecting the quality of surface and groundwater resources. Using environmentally safe alternatives to land application of manure and organic by-products can be an integral part of the overall nutrient management plan. Manure use for energy production is being investigated and even commercially tested as a viable source of energy. Methods to reduce the weight, volume or form of manure can decrease transportation costs and create a more valuable product. Mixing manure or co-composting with industrial or municipal by-products to produce value-added materials for specialized uses can become an additional income source for our farmers.

As many of these alternatives to conventional manure management activities have not been fully developed or refined, industry standards do not always exist that provide for their consistent implementation. Comprehensive changes to our already progressive laws and regulations pertaining to land application of manure illustrate the need for a concerted and centralized effort to assist our farmers in realizing the full potential of this resource.

The Agricultural By-Product Management Technology Board, which we are working with the Department of Agriculture to revitalize, has the mandate to continually review advancing technologies, evaluate specific regional manure management needs and opportunities and encourage cooperation among the agricultural community, industry and local governments regarding agricultural by-product management technologies.

As solutions to this pressing issue are developed, the Board will serve as a valuable source of information and assistance for our agricultural community. If state and Federal lawmakers and local communities are going to tell a farmer what he cannot do with his manure, then it is only reasonable that we provide him with options for measures he *can* take; the benefits from these actions can be witnessed from the farm to the city, the reservoir to the Chesapeake Bay.