

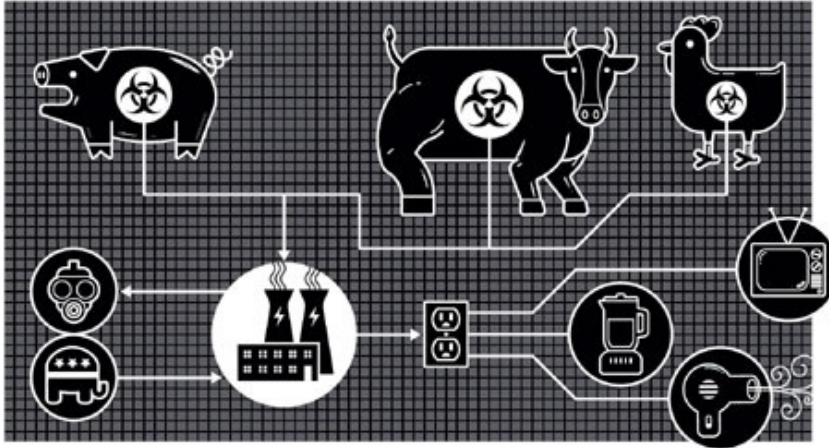


Brown Power

Posted by [Glenn](#) on March 4, 2006 - 9:36pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Alternative energy](#)

Tags: [biomass](#), [brown power](#), [manure](#), [oil](#), [peak oil](#) [[list all tags](#)]



The NY Times is really starting to get the complexities of examining potential alternative energy projects. Despite the obvious toilet humor potential of the subject, they had a serious editorial today about [converting manure to power](#):

As a livestock farmer and environmental lawyer, I've paid particular attention to discussion about using manure as "green power." The idea sounds appealing, but power from manure turns out to be a poor source of energy. Unlike solar or wind, it can create more environmental problems than it solves. And it ends up subsidizing large agribusiness. That's why energy from manure should really be considered a form of "brown power."

The article goes on to say that subsidizing manure to energy projects may artificially increase the size of livestock farms, which has all sorts of impacts on energy consumption and the local environment of those farms. Indeed, subsidies continue to skew all analyses of different project's true value.

I couldn't agree more with the last paragraph of the article:

Using manure as power sounds like a good idea, but it's not. The energy that can be generated from manure is not worth the expense. And by lowering industrial animal operations' cost of production, subsidizing manure power pushes family farms further toward the brink of extinction. Our money would be better spent investing in truly sustainable, sensible ways of producing energy and food.

As I mentioned [before](#) which was picked up by the local political blog - [Gotham Gazette](#), we need a common understanding of the boundaries/terminology of a proper EROI analysis of alternative fuels to decide where to invest our resources. At least if everyone can agreed on the terms of the



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