

Organics Management to Reduce Methane and Climate Change Workgroups

Meeting #6 Notes (October 7, 2-4pm)

- I. Welcome and Agenda Overview
- II. Continue Topic #3 policy discussion: Financials/end-markets/purchasing, Soil health/nitrogen cycling and Regenerative agriculture

a. Policy 1: Procurement Requirements: Using Recycled Organics Products (based on CA1383) – Starting January 1, 2024, require cities and counties to procure annually a quantity of recovered organic waste products.

Strengths/Concerns/Issues/Questions

- Kate K.: It makes sense for jurisdictions to buy back compost. Especially, if it's just yard waste from an urban environment, it should go back to the urban environment. If food waste is in there that came from agricultural land, some materials should be returned to agricultural land. So, we have a true circular economy.
- Andy S.: Are there minimum quality standards for CA? I think local governments would want to make sure that contamination/acceptance standards are included. Can local governments meet requirements through policy (say requiring post construction soil mandates?). How do we ensure it doesn't not displace existing capacity/demand and is focused on new demand only?
- Neil: In CA, Green Building and landscaping ordinances have helped. Jurisdictions being invested in procurement and the quality of the materials was important. Jurisdictions can work on collection issues and with haulers to keep materials cleaner.
- Wendy W.: Can we get more info/background on how/why the energy offset option is part of the end market goals in moving the compost after it's processed?
 - Evan E.: To answer that: AD bio methane component can go to RNG, grid or compost and mulch. Want a portfolio that can give lots of options.
 - Vlad: Agrees that energy uses are very important.
- John C.: Consider requiring use of compost in city/county projects where there is an identified project budget with a revenue source. An example would be use in a road project funded in the cities CIP. That would be easier on a city than requiring it in its M&O budget which generally is out of the general fund. Make it more palatable for cities to accept something like that.
- Derek: Did CA do research to determine what the demand for compost was/is for each city? Historical spend, etc.
 - Neil E.: Most cities/jurisdictions, by and large, had zero demand. The goal of the procurement standard was to build demand. Per capital calculation. Ordinances help generate demand.
 - Derek: Not zero demand but depends on jurisdiction. Practical lines of requirement to buy so much. Is there a need to buy so much compost (e.g., parks, roads, etc.)?
- Vlad: As I understand it from this discussion, compost procurement is also not the only compliance pathway. If they need to reduce the amount of compost they buy back, they can increase their energy purchases, for example.

- Samantha W.: What is mulch? Need to define.
- Kate K.: What is a rough conversion of one ton of compostable feedstock into finished compost? Is it expecting jurisdiction to buy it all back?
 - Samantha W.: One ton in to one cubic yard back.
- Wendy W.: What/how/at what expense do we help local jurisdictions track and purchase inputs and outputs?
- Vlad: Need to think about the electricity component and how it interacts with other procurement requirement facilities face. Are you going to require utilities to deliver this kind of product to a specific buyer? Also, energy procurement side questions – how is electricity tracked? Happy to work with subgroup on this. How do these work with utility clean energy use requirement? How does this count for those? Also, what do we expect utilities to deliver to a customer? RNG mismatch with what a city can buy back.
- Troy: If I were a jurisdiction, I would want to know what happens if there isn't enough product to purchase?
- Shannon: Per session law from this year, jurisdictions are already required to use compost (/mulch) for public projects when the project can use compost.
 - Heather: Yes, but this goes further than the current statute.
- Neil: Early adopters in CA with active compost programs have materials already being sold in full. Policy isn't causing an uptick for those jurisdictions. Concerns about buying and procuring materials when there's no need for it. Composters are also concerned. In other jurisdictions without historical programs, there is a lot of room for progress to be made.
- Samantha W.: Concerns about procurement portion for jurisdictions. Jurisdictions would have to buy 100% of product. Impacts composters. Is there language specifies that you are using compost from certain geographical areas and what for?
- Kent K.: Maybe base procurement off population base. For some communities, they are already using everything they have – don't want to pull it away from that supply chain. Should make procurement based on availability of compost.
 - Shannon: And will cities get credit for any in-jurisdiction use?

b. Policy 2: Beginning January 1, 20xx, Dept. of Agriculture must create a 3-year compost reimbursement pilot program for farming operations purchasing and using compost products from WA (from HB 2713)

Strengths/Concerns/Issues/Questions

- Kate K.: Loves this! Soil, carbon and role of organics has a profound effect and is backed by research. Cost is a barrier for farmers. This will help them with shifting cost-burden. Fully supports.
 - Mary H.: Cost and difficulty spreading the compost (lack of equipment) are barriers.
- Neil E.: Working with CA agriculture, UC Extensions, RCD, USDA, NRCA, etc. to develop workshop series for agricultural operations. Start with a half-day session on basics (e.g., what is compost, regulatory requirements, types of feedstocks) followed by 2nd day in the field (agricultural use, healthy soil programs, funding mechanisms, etc.) and 3rd day with in-field demo. Hoping it will be a perpetual program before moving around CA.

- Spencer O.: Is this to get farmers to use something they haven't used before or develop the market in certain areas? Or both? Is there a limit on how far the material can be transported from/to the farm?
 - Neil E.: Yes for both. More about opening new markets (e.g., vineyards are a huge opportunity). Research is clear on benefits and need to understand why it's not being used. Market penetration issues. Also looking at other crop sectors (e.g., tomatoes are a high value per acre crop – compost use is growing). Farmers telling stories to other farmers is very effective. Healthy Soils program administered by Dept. of Ag. Local organizations apply for grants and then work with local farmers (if farmers receive grants, they are required to participate in field demo days for other farmers). This program applies broader than just compost use and includes any of 24 healthy soil practices.
- Shannon: Likes the approach of policy. A theme that focuses on larger generators and larger users makes sense since we have a robust collection for smaller generators (e.g., NJ bill does this – driving demand for more facilities in a scalable/feasible way).
- Samantha W.: Need to look at partnering with conservation districts because they have great resource of doing a lot of programs with farmers of all sizes.
- Heather: Grant programs could go to conservation districts to give out grants to organize in-field tours and create peer to peer education.
 - Samantha W.: Need to be conscious that many conservation districts are grant funded. Make sure that CDs have the capacity to fulfill these grants and get funding for their staff time in addition to grant money to pass through.
 - Shannon: Agree on the conservation districts. They are also large users or facilitators of large users.
 - Kate K.: I believe a common way to do this type of grant program is for the state agriculture agencies to delegate to the local conservation districts where applicable. Sustainable Farms & Fields through WA state agriculture already exists. It's on hold due to lack of funding. Could it restart for this?

III. Presentations to share background on Topic #4: Energy Generation/Credits/Carbon Sequestration/Nutrient Recovery/Incentives Equity

- a. Vlad Gutman-Britten, Climate Solutions
- b. Evan Edgar, Edgar & Associates
- c. Kate Kurtz, City of Seattle

IV. Speaker Q&A

- a. Discussion included whether funding from Climate Commitment Act could be go to local governments to do some of this work and to farmers (yes, the law is expansively written), the dairy digester pipeline with regards to manure, electrification, keeping RNG alive as procurement, the market for RNG in WA, and cost-effectiveness of anaerobic digestion and composting.
- b. Resources shared included the [WA Soil Health Initiative](#) (15.145 RCW) and King County's recently published [carbon accounting for food scrap composting](#).

V. Call for people interested in joining the food waste subcommittee

- a. Currently writing up policies to bring back to workgroup

VI. Next meeting: 10/21, 2-4pm

- a. Continue Topic #4 discussion and presentations for Topic #5
- VII. Meeting notes and presentations will be posted on www.OrganicsWorkgroup.org