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SARE Program Producer Final Report

Project Goals

The Canaan Valley Agricultural Cooperative, Inc. (CVAC) brings local farmers together to collectively better manage their manure. CVAC provides a logistical and funding vehicle for increasing and improving manure storage, handling, distribution, and marketing.

Updated Crop and Livestock Information

As 7 individual farms we crop 2000 acres of corn and 1250 acres of hay and pasture in 3 States. The farms maintain over 1300 cows and over 1000 youngstock.

The Cooperators and their roles

Laurelbrook Farm, Freund's Farm Inc., Elm Knoll Farm, and Carlwood Farm formed the Cooperative. Peter Jacquier, from Laurelbrook is President; David Jacquier, from Elm Knoll is Vice President, Benjamin Freund, from Freund's is Treasurer; and Doug Carlson, from Carlwood is Secretary. Recently the following farms joined the Cooperative: Sunset Hill Farm, Inc.; Dennis H. Jasmine; and Pine Meadow Farm.

What we did

We met over a series of months with each other and representatives from NRCS, FHA, the State of CT, AgStar, various vendors, Small Business Assistance, and our lawyer. We became a cooperative, CVAC, and applied for several grants and technical assistance. CVAC received a 240,000 dollar grant from CT. We hashed and rehashed our goals. We visited composting operations, squeezers, sewage treatment plants, and marketing organizations. To date CVAC has built a 380 cow manure storage at Elm Knoll and a 650 cow manure separator at Laurel Brook. Another separator is planned for summer at the Freund's and Carlwood is planning a manure storage area.

Findings

The final costs after meeting improved regulations are much higher than anticipated. Back up systems and safety overrides are essential. As a group of farmers we eventually found better solutions than we might have individually.

Transportation to a central point for methane digestion and separation was not a feasible alternative. Although the farms are relatively close together, we could not fathom how we could ever recoup the costs of moving the manure the extra trips to central processing and then back to the field. In addition, there was only minimal potential return for selling electricity back to CL&P at one to three cents per kwh. CL&P would not allow us to use their lines to transmit the electricity to member farms where the value would have increased to ten cents per kwh.

CVAC decided to meet immediate needs of storage and improved

handling. At the same time we are pursuing marketing opportunities for composted manure solids.

#### New Ideas Generated

1. Investigate solids marketing options
2. Research technical solutions to reducing liquid volume
3. Better distribution of the liquid portion on nearby fields
4. Improved storage that meet federal standards

We will continue to use the practices investigated to insure our compliance with future legislation.

#### Communication with other producers

CVAC shows the advantages of organizing and attacking a common problem together. We tell other producers of our successes and have tried to increase our membership in CVAC.

#### Outreach

The farmers involved have conducted private and public tours of the new facilities. We have spoken to the local media. When the weather breaks we will include facility tours with the summer field days.