



The UK's Simpler Recycling legislation comes into effect at the end of this month (March), and after years of discussions, revisions and legislative changes we're about to see the impact of mandating businesses to separate food waste (and other streams) for recycling. Lee Dobinson, chief commercial officer of BioteCH4 outlines what to expect

# Simpler recycling: A game-changer for the UK's anaerobic digestion sector?

**S**een as a significant opportunity for the bioenergy industry, these potential increases in feedstock across the anaerobic digestion (AD) sector will see rises in biogas production and an accelerated approach to meeting the UK's net-zero commitments and leveraging the significant role the AD industry plays in the renewable energy sector.

## Unlocking the potential in wasted food

Ultimately, as an industry, AD would like to ensure that it is only processing unavoidable food waste. But with nearly 10 million tonnes of food wasted annually in the UK, there is still a huge improvement to be made on the education of businesses and households around what we can all do to

reduce the amount of food waste currently ending up in landfill or incineration.

By separating, we begin to measure; by educating, we understand the impact. When combined, these two elements should drive better behaviour, ultimately reducing avoidable food waste.

Enter AD. If education plays a crucial role in rolling out this new legislation — and let's be honest, it should — then ensuring that higher capture rates of food waste are diverted to AD will no doubt enhance the sector's efficiency.

Ensuring a closed circuit wherever possible means food waste can be processed and transformed into biogas, renewable energy and nutrient-rich biofertiliser for crop improvements.

## Aligning industry standards and commercial objectives

The implementation of Simpler Recycling over the next 12 months will see a further increase in feedstock availability as businesses and households align their food waste recycling habits. It will eventually drive an increase in reliable and consistent feedstock for the biogas industry aiding sustainability

targets and the global goal in reducing carbon emissions.

The change also offers some commercial opportunities for some business, with a new consistent supply of feedstock, some smaller AD operators will be faced with the opportunity to grow and expand their operations and others will streamline existing projects and capitalise on the gains of this legislation as businesses seek a partner for the recycling of their (in some cases) newly captured waste streams.

Legislative change further anchors the AD sector and the important role it plays in the renewable energy sector and the UK reliance on imported fossil fuels.

This is a defining moment for the AD sector and the new legislation will drive innovation, expansion and forge the path for the significant role our sector plays in in the renewable energy sector. Ensuring the country is educated around the benefits of the food waste hierarchy, we (the AD sector) can put this feedstock to its most valuable use. Biogas offers a flexible and scalable solution to the requirement for the UK's renewable energy adoption.

AD operators have a significant role to play

in the preparation and implementation of the Simpler Recycling legislation. The opportunity of increased feedstock availability will no doubt bring its challenges and so the industry needs to ensure its operations, infrastructure and logistic solutions are optimised and primed ahead of the change.

BioteCH4 actively engages with potential and existing customers across a variety of sectors to ensure a smooth transition and compliance with the opportunity food waste recycling presents. The industry should be ready to receive and leverage the benefits the additional funding to this sector will deliver, using it to push expansion and innovation.

In summary the introduction of the Simpler Recycling legislation and all that it brings with it, forms an accelerated catalyst for growth in the green energy sector. AD operators and their key decision makers should act now to strengthen their existing partnerships, educate new ones and harness the role of AD in the longer-term journey towards a more sustainable future. ●

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