



## NEWS RELEASE

**Wednesday 6 November 2013**

### **Wrexham farmer selected as finalist for prestigious Award**

Richard Tomlinson, fifth generation family farmer at Lodge Farm, Holt, last night was selected as a finalist for a highly prestigious award at a ceremony held at the Sixways Stadium in Worcester.

The Business Farming 2013 “British Farming Awards” have been introduced as a way of highlighting to the farming community creative thinking, innovative approaches and the relentless hard work of farmers throughout the industry. As winner of the Renewables Innovator of the Year, Richard beat off strong competition from farmers in Suffolk and Oxfordshire who have also diversified into green energy and embraced the renewable energy technologies of wind turbines, biomass and solar farms.

As Managing Director of fre-energy, the company he set up 5 years ago together with his brother and engineer Jonathan and technical guru Chris Morris, Richard has developed an Anaerobic Digestion (AD) plant, which processes farm animal waste to produce bio-gas which can then be converted into power, in the form of both electricity and heat. This renewable energy is suitable for use not only on the farm but can also be exported to the National Grid, enabling homes and businesses alike to benefit from the supply whilst providing the farmer with a valuable income stream from the Government. The residual liquid and solid “digestate” materials from the AD process are applied to the farm’s fields as highly nutritious and natural fertilisers, without incurring any of the costs, smells or environmental issues normally associated with widely used chemical fertilisers.

Richard told the audience: “The plant at Lodge Farm has been in operation 24/7 for the past 4 years without a single hiccup and we now have plants in operation at 3 other farms around the UK. We have developed unique technology, for which both UK and US patents have been awarded, to enable farms to process their animal slurry, which would otherwise have to be disposed of. Although AD plants are in use on thousands of farms elsewhere in Europe, none of these plants have been designed to deal with the problems associated with processing animal waste and many are therefore beginning to fail. As farmers ourselves, we have invented technology that is proven to work on farms.”

On-farm AD has enormous potential to deliver renewable energy from bio-gas and to lessen the carbon footprint of farming, whilst at the same time reducing greenhouse gas pollution from organic wastes and returning valuable nutrients back to the land. Fre-energy is in a unique position to play a major role in transforming the UK agricultural and environmental industries.

**\*\*\* ENDS \*\*\***

**Notes to Editor:-**

Where on-farm digestion is successful in Europe, it has been as a result of subsidies for the energy produced and guaranteed long-term markets for it, allowing investment to be made on the basis of a commercially sound business plan. This has contributed to a huge growth in farm digesters with, for example, more than 4000 plants currently operating in Germany. Such success, however, has been based on the production or import onto the farm of high energy crops such as maize for co-digestion, rather than on the processing of slurry alone. This, of course, then begs the question of whether we should be using our precious land for food or for fuel. In a world where the population is projected to grow by around 2 billion to over 8 billion within the next generation, the global demand for food will inevitably continue to rise and the use of increasingly scant agricultural land for the production of electricity or bio-fuel will most likely be socially and politically unacceptable. In the words of the Government Review of Waste Policy in England 2011, "our aim is to get the most energy out of genuinely residual waste, not to get the most waste into energy recovery."

***For a large range of images or information on this Release, please contact Paul Tittle at [paul@barkingdogcommunications.co.uk](mailto:paul@barkingdogcommunications.co.uk) or call on 07896 354737.***

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