



Anaergia Launches Rialto, Calif., Food Diversion, Energy Recovery Plant

The plant will process 1,000 tons per day of food waste and biosolids that will be shipped to Rialto from outlying areas. Final products will include electricity and pipeline-injected RNG.

Arlene Karidis | Mar 12, 2019

Organics recycling solution provider Anaergia is on course to launch what it says will be the largest food waste diversion and energy recovery facility in North America, in partnership with two major waste management companies, three California utilities and several sanitation agencies in that state. The city of Rialto, Calif., will host the plant on property adjacent to its wastewater treatment plant.

Anaergia will leverage proprietary technology that separates organics from mixed solid waste of any contamination level in order to recover energy and make fertilizer. The process involves anaerobic digestion (AD).

“This capability unlocks the largest source of organic waste—organics in municipal solid waste—without needing to rely on human behaviors for source separation to recover a clean feedstock,” says Yaniv Scherson, managing director of Anaergia, Western U.S.

The plant will process 1,000 tons per day of food waste and biosolids, which will be shipped to Rialto from outlying areas. Final products will include electricity to put in the grid and to power the plant as well as pipeline-injected renewable natural gas (RNG). Waste heat will be used to dry biosolids to convert into fertilizer.

“Key to successfully scaling was the technology’s ability to cost effectively process high throughput in a small footprint. Also important is LA’s and the state’s mandates to recycle organics at very large quantities,” says Scherson.

While the Sanitation Bureau of the City of Los Angeles and the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County and of Orange County will provide biosolids as feedstock, Waste Management and Republic Services will provide food waste. Waste Management is using Anaergia’s organics extrusion press (OREX) to separate food from its stream at a materials recovery facility (MRF) in Sun Valley, outside of Los Angeles, to launch soon. Because this press can separate organics without dilution water, it will cut costs to haul materials to Rialto.

The Sun Valley MRF will extract up to 300 tons of food and other organic waste per day, which will be collected from commercial customers.

“Through this collaboration, we will be able to expand our current organics service offerings and provide critical infrastructure to take the next step toward meeting diversion goals for Southern California,” says Doug Corcoran, director of public sector solutions at Waste Management of Southern California.

“[In addition to supporting California’s 75 percent diversion goal,] we will recycle more organics, offering the region a viable green solution and supporting the generation of local and safe green jobs,” he says.

Anaheim Public Utility, Southwest Gas Corporation and Waste Management are purchasing RNG. SoCal Edison will buy renewable electricity.

“RNG has been on the company’s radar for some time. We are excited about the sustainability possibilities with this fuel and continue to look for potential projects that are complementary to our customers,” says Randy Gabe, vice president of gas resources for Southwest Gas Corporation.

The utility will buy about 210,000 dekatherms a year, the equivalent to gas used by more than 5,000 of its Southern California residential customers in that timeframe.

Committed to cutting its greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent by 2025, Southwest Gas Corporation is replacing gasoline and diesel vehicles with compressed natural gas alternatives where possible.

“Investing in RNG was a logical choice for us. It has the long-term potential to make up a portion of our gas supply portfolio, while creating a beneficial long-term environmental impact by reducing emissions from a sustainable energy source,” says Gabe.

The chosen site for the Rialto Bioenergy Facility (RBF), a brownfield, offers advantages to other partners. Feedstock suppliers have a location central to Southern California, cutting transportation time and costs. The city will get revenue by tons delivered and amount of electricity and gas generated, as well as receive lease payments while revitalizing what would otherwise be stranded infrastructure.

For now, Rialto is receiving imported organics but is considering sending biosolids from its wastewater treatment plant to the facility in the future.

“We would get revenue from that while saving money in that we will no longer pay to dispose biosolids that they will use in their process,” says Tom Crowley, utilities manager for the city of Rialto.

“The city is also happy to play a role in helping to meet California’s requirements of offsetting food waste in landfill and reducing greenhouse gases while converting food waste to gas and electricity,” he adds.

Construction of the Rialto Bioenergy Facility has begun. The plant is slated to launch in mid-2020.

This facility will produce the equivalent of 13 megawatts of clean energy per year. The net carbon dioxide emissions reduction will be approximately 220,000 metric tons annually, which is the equivalent of taking 47,500 cars off the road.

The RBF is co-funded by the California Energy Commission, U.S. Department of Energy, CalRecycle, the state of California and significant private investment.