

Farm bill includes chicken-waste-to-energy measure

Dec. 17 -- The \$286 billion version of the farm bill that passed the Senate 79-14 Friday includes a provision to generate power with chicken droppings.

At the behest of Oklahoma Sen. James Inhofe, ranking Republican on the Environment and Public Works Committee, the Department of Agriculture would create a Poultry Sustainability Research Council to tackle the possibilities.

Inhofe's home state is among those with the highest number of factory farms, often called concentrated animal feeding operations. Nationwide, excrement from the hundreds, even thousands, of animals housed on these industrial-scale farms causes significant air and water pollution, well documented by scientists and environmental organizations.

In September, Oklahoma State University professor Michael Dicks testified before the Senate environment committee about advancing biodigester technology that converts animal manure into energy.

"I agree with Professor Dicks, and believe that a great potential exists to create energy from animal waste," Inhofe said in a statement Dec. 14. "I have worked to ensure we pursue all options for addressing this byproduct."

Negotiators from the Senate and House are now fine-tuning the farm bill before sending it to the White House. The House passed its package in July.