

Environment Daily 1276, 30/08/02

ISSUE 1276 - FRIDAY 30 AUGUST 2002

Germany funds sewage sludge incineration

The German environment ministry is financing the construction of a prototype sewage sludge incineration plant and power station in Sonthofen, Bavaria. If the model proves successful it could be used elsewhere enabling the amount of sewage sludge spread on farmland to be significantly cut, and so reducing chemical pollution risks, the ministry said.

Like all EU countries, German production of sewage sludge has increased since implementation of the 1991 EU urban wastewater treatment directive, and around 40% is used in agriculture. Earlier this year Baden Württemberg's environment minister Ulrich Müller called for all sewage sludge to be incinerated rather than spread on farmland ([ED 14/02/02](#)). The Swiss government also announced plans in May to ban use of sewage sludge on farmland from the start of 2003 - a move that will cost an extra €58m a year ([ED 14/05/02](#)).

<http://www.environmentdaily.com/articles/index.cfm?action=article&ref=11587>

Follow-up: [German environment ministry](#), tel: +49 1 888 3050 and [press release](#).

Article Index: [water, energy, agriculture](#)

Follow-up: German environment ministry <http://www.bmu.de/fset800.php>, tel: +49 1 888 3050 and press release <http://www.bmu.de/presse/2002/pm210.php>.

ISSUE 1214 - TUESDAY 14 MAY 2002

Swiss plan to burn all sewage sludge confirmed

The Swiss government has issued detailed plans to outlaw use of sewage sludge on farmland. Proposals for changes to national law announced yesterday will ban land spreading on grazing land and market gardens from 1 January 2003 and on all land from October 2005. By then another 80,000 tonnes per year of sludge will have to be incinerated.

A complete shift to incineration will mean extra costs of SFr40m (euros 58m) per year. This is justified, the government says, because land spreading carries long-term risks for the environment and human health. As well as heavy metals, it says, pharmaceuticals, perfumes and endocrine-disrupting substances all contaminate sludge.

Switzerland's move poses a challenge to sludge management approaches elsewhere in Europe, though Baden-Württemberg state in Germany recently called for a rethink on land spreading ([ED 14/02/02](#)).

Implementation of the EU's 1991 urban wastewater treatment directive is leading to higher volumes of sewage sludge arising; the proportion going to land rose in most EU countries in the mid 1990s. Over half of all sewage sludge is used in agriculture in Austria, Belgium, France and the UK, and around 40% in Germany and Sweden. The practice was backed as the best environmental option in an EU study released earlier this year ([ED 15/03/02](#)).

Specialised sludge incinerators, cement plants and municipal waste incinerators are all expected to play a role in diverting sewage sludge from land. Even so, the government expects a capacity shortfall until around 2005. In this case it proposes to allow shipments abroad for a limited period for incineration in lignite-fired power stations.

An unresolved question is whether and how it might be possible to extract phosphorus - a valuable plant nutrient - from sludge before it is incinerated. Switzerland currently imports about 10,000 tonnes of phosphorus in mineral fertilisers, animal feed and other products.

<http://www.environmentdaily.com/articles/index.cfm?action=article&ref=12142>).

Follow-up: [Swiss environment ministry](#), tel: +41 31 322 5511, a [press release](#), [draft ordinance](#) and [explanatory note](#). See also [EU report](#) on implementation of directive 86/278/EEC on use of sewage sludge in agriculture.

Article Index: [waste, chemicals, health/consumers, agriculture](#)