

Ethanol plant branches out into side products

John Lindt 7:43 p.m. PDT May 9, 2016



(Photo: Submitted)

Calgren Renewable Fuels in Pixley, [Tulare County's](#) only ethanol plant, has invested in key co-products to sell over the years as it cranks out 58 million gallons of fuel ethanol each year.

The plant was the state's first when it was built in 2009.



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Today, they also sell 400,000 tons per year of distiller's grain — animal feed to local dairies and feedlots as well as 1.5 million gallons of corn oil that serves local poultry producers and bio-diesel facilities. Another company, French-owned [Air Liquide](#), captures carbon dioxide emissions from the ethanol plant. The carbon dioxide recovered is then purified and liquified to meet the specifications for food and beverage makers who want to quickly freeze and preserve their products.

Calgren uses dairy manure biogas, made at their new digester, to fire the boilers at their refinery — turning a waste product into a useful low-carbon fuel with the useful heat generated also making electric power, a so-called cogeneration process.

As byproduct of that process, the dried manure solids that are discharged at the back end of the digester cycle are trucked back to a dairy every day to be used as bedding for the herd.

Now, Calgren is adding another byproduct of the process — electricity generated from this expanded cogeneration operation. The company produces 11 megawatts of electric power — used in the manufacturing process — to run their refinery. The plant is now more than self-sufficient and has never even been connected to the electric grid, said company president Lyle Schlyer.

Starting next month, Calgren will be selling excess power to [Southern California Edison](#) to the tune of 5 megawatts — enough to light up close to 900 homes, all the housing units in Pixley.

Schlyer said Calgren has been working toward the goal of selling power to the utility and finally the law and regulatory rules are helping it to happen.

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