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## USU Alumni Spotlight - Conly Hansen



Professor Conly Hansen has spent decades studying ways to rid farmers of their agricultural waste. Now he's doing much more than just studying.

Professor Hansen, along with his brother, Carl, and business partner, Ed Watts, have created a special kind of recycling plant that creates electricity from cow manure. The three men run a company called Andigen that is working to install these recycling plants with their anaerobic digesters around the U.S., Canada, and even Africa.

How it all works is the anaerobic digesters process the manure, producing methane gas. This gas is then pumped into an engine where it is converted into electricity. The electricity can then be used to power the plant itself, the farm, and even sold back to the utility company. Whatever material that is not digested can be used as nutrient-rich compost.

Presently, Andigen has plants in Idaho and Utah, with more planned for sites across the U.S. and Canada.

Hansen hopes to soon see a plant go up in Niger, Africa as well. Three years ago, word of the recycling plants reached the people in Niger. A man named Salaou Garba began writing to Hansen expressing his interest. Garba, who does not speak English, traveled to Salt Lake City somewhat unexpectedly with no American money and no place to stay. Garba was finally able to make it to Logan and, with interpreter Pungu Okito's help, discuss the possibility of constructing a recycling plant in Niger. Garba was also able to meet with other USU faculty members to learn about other agricultural issues, such as animal husbandry and irrigation.

Although the waste-to-energy plants would be extremely beneficial for Niger, the technology is not cheap. But through Garba's persistence, he secured \$250,000 from the World Bank to help make this recycling plant idea a reality.

Professor Hansen is well acquainted with the agricultural way of life. He grew up on a farm in Utah before attending Utah State University. He graduated with a bachelor's and master's in mechanical engineering, and then earned a Ph.D. in agricultural engineering from the Ohio State University.

Hansen eventually returned to USU and began teaching in the Department of Nutrition & Food Science in 1985. Since 2004, he has also served as the director of the Center for Profitable Uses of Agricultural Byproducts.

He says he came back to Logan because it seemed like there were good opportunities to do research at Utah State. Also, the level of cooperation among faculty members and departments was a big plus.

Outside of his research and work, Hansen first and foremost enjoys spending time with his family. But the professor is also an avid skier and snowboarder, though his favorite pastime is paragliding off the mountains of Utah.