

Press Release

CDM – Composting Does Matter

Has one of the strongest tools to tackle global warming and support sustainable development been carelessly overlooked? In a recent joint study by Rogger et al. of the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (Swiss Institute of Technology – ETH) and South Pole Carbon Asset Management Ltd., the authors show how composting projects easily out-perform best-of-class CDM and qualify for the Gold Standard level.

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According to the IPCC, waste is one of the seven key sectors contributing to climate change. With fast growing populations, rising personal incomes and expanding industrialization, waste dumps in developing countries are rising steadily. Due to single-edged methodologies, the prevalent CDM project type that deals with waste is landfill gas (LFG) collection. But, according to a recent joint study (“Composting Projects Under the Clean Development Mechanism: Sustainable Contribution to Mitigate Climate Change”) by Rogger et al. of the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (Swiss Institute of Technology – ETH) and South Pole Carbon Asset Management Company Ltd., LFG is a weaker tool than composting because it occurs after and not before a methane-emitting dump site is closed. In contrast, composting avoids these emissions from day one of the waste cycle, thus keeping it methane-free beyond its actual separation and composting work.

The authors of the aforementioned study — recently published in the scientific journal *Waste Management* — plead for a revision of existing methodologies to better represent GHG reduction opportunities through composting, which to date are developed using an outdated solid-waste baseline that favors the structure of LFG projects. Even though composting leads to an immediate avoidance of nearly all methane emissions, the monetary rewards from composting are discounted and delayed. From a mitigation point of view, this situation seems paradoxical; it is a situation that must change.

The process of municipal waste separation and composting is ecologically and socially beneficial, but it is not eligible to be included as CDM under standard models. This process, however, matches the key requirements of the Clean Development Mechanism. Applying 12 approved sustainability criteria and comparing composting projects to wind, solar, biomass and other projects (labeled with the Gold Standard), the final outcome of the study is crystal clear: composting matches or outperforms other best-in-class projects and is on par with Gold Standard criteria. Given the study’s sound rationale for a stronger role of composting in the CDM, we believe that high quality composting projects should be included in the Gold Standard scheme.

The study’s findings do not come as a surprise for CDM *aficionados*. According to Christoph Sutter, South Pole’s CEO, “Composting projects are prime examples of highly sustainable greenhouse gas abatement projects. I hope that after reading this eye-opening study this will be recognized by the key decision-makers.” South Pole has already gathered experience with composting projects in Egypt, Indonesia (in the form of a PoA) and South Africa. The latter was used (among others) for offsetting the national teams’ emissions at the World Cup 2010 last summer.

**About****the****study:**

Based on an idea by South Pole Carbon Asset Management Ltd., the study was conducted at Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH – Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) by Cyrill Rogger, Francois Beaurain and Tobias S.Schmidt. The study, “Composting projects under the Clean Development Mechanism: Sustainable Contribution to Mitigate Climate Change,” can be downloaded in full from the following address: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.wasman.2010.09.007>
<http://www.ethz.ch>

About South Pole:

South Pole is transforming the Western hemisphere’s response to climate change from mere talk to concrete action. With 80 employees spread out over the globe (60 on site in emerging host countries), the company is working hard to develop and implement transparent, effective and sustainable solutions to meet the pressing challenge of climate change. Our unparalleled portfolio comprises projects in the fields of renewable energy, forestry, energy efficiency, waste management, methane avoidance, and many other sectors.

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