

A NEW TAKE ON TAKE OUT

In the face of rising prices for animal feed and fertilizer, Japan is responding to greater demand for animal feed pellets made from recycled leftovers.

Japan disposes of some 10 million tons of food waste a year. At one time, the leftovers were put in landfills for decomposition.

Since 2001 however, the government has pushed for a recycling industry to turn food scraps into animal feed or it sends leftovers to facilities where the methane gas produced by rotting foods powers industrial plants.

One former garbage truck driver started his own recycled food company when he became frustrated with dumping tons of food waste daily. Today, his trucks pick up rice balls, sandwiches and milk discarded from over one thousand 7-Eleven stores and bring them to a factory on the outskirts of Tokyo to be turned into animal feed for pigs and chickens. Japan's food industry is the biggest producer of food waste and recycles more than 70 per cent of its leftovers. About half is turned into feed.

On the other hand, Japan imports about 75 per cent of its animal feed stocks and is the world's biggest corn importer, to feed animals.

student lunches could be providing heat and air conditioning

This past year, the government of Tokyo commissioned a pilot project to produce methane and ethanol from leftover school meals. If successful, one day soon, student lunches could be providing heat and air conditioning for the same schools where they were eaten.

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