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19

## AB Produce slams Environment Agency in stench warfare



By Rod Addy+  
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**Vegetable processor AB Produce claims efforts to eradicate unpleasant odours from its plant at Measham in Leicestershire have received poor support from the Environment Agency, despite spending millions to tackle the problem.**

A report on BBC News Leicester highlighted complaints raised by Measham Campaign Against The Smell (CATS), a local group that said the factory generated a "stench" that at times made air quality "unbearable". This had been going on since it was set up in 2004, it said.

However, AB Produce md Paul Bridgen said the company recognised the problem and had worked hard to overcome it, with little advice from the Environment Agency. In the process it had committed more than £3M to the project and was now close to the best solution in the form of a bespoke anaerobic digestion (AD) facility.

Waste water used to wash potatoes was causing the pong, Bridgen told FoodManufacture.co.uk. "In 2006/2007 we made a £500,000-£550,000 investment in water treatment equipment that didn't do the job.

### 'Wouldn't support it'

"We saw the Environment Agency and said we would clean up the water through aeration, but they wouldn't support it. They said they were not a water treatment agency."

The company then spent £320,000 on a system that separated solid from liquid waste, sending the water to lagoons and the solids to land spreading. It is now looking at improving this further with the installation of a £2.2M bespoke plant that will dissolve solid waste and turn it into biogas.

"We put in planning for this AD plant and it has been 18 months to two years in planning. We are now trying to agree to our use of cookies. Find out more here

He believed attempting to satisfy the requirements of the Environment Agency for its projects had taken too long. It was only when he turned to the local council that he achieved a breakthrough, he said. "We have got the firm support of the local council to build the plant."

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Having cleared that hurdle, he now hoped the Environment Agency would grant a permit for the AD facility by the end of this month (April). Given that, he said he would then expect it to be operational by the end of this year.

### Pungent quest

Bridgen claimed that throughout its pungent quest, the Environment Agency had not been as supportive or as communicative as it could have been.

"My true belief is the Environment Agency should be working with business. It should be saying, 'you really need to move this way'."

The Environment Agency responded: "We have been working closely with AB Produce and North West Leicestershire District Council to help tackle the odour issues.

"We have met with the company and the council to provide advice on the permit application for the proposed anaerobic digestion plant and are due to meet again next Monday [April 28].

### 'Role to advise businesses'

"The Environment Agency's role is to advise businesses on environmental permit applications and to ensure they are adhered to once they are in place."

AB Produce supplies foodservice and supermarket customers with potato and prepared vegetable products, as well as providing stew mixes for manufacturers.



Stench warfare: A local campaign group claimed the odour was unbearable but AB Produce said it was striving to remedy the problem

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