

Press Release

Embargoed until 11:00 AM (EDT) on June 19, 2024



Construction Underway on World's First Purpose-Built Melon-to-Plastic Manufacturing Plant

AgroRenew will manufacture 100% biodegradable plastic using Indiana watermelons and other crop waste; hiring to begin this summer for key science, engineering, and plant management roles

Vincennes, Ind. (June 19, 2024) - Sixteen months after Knox County farmers pondered what could be done with 40 million pounds of unharvested melons, area leaders and residents gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking of a plant that will take those unpicked melons and turn them into plastic.

And it won't be just any plastic; AgroRenew will produce 2,062,500 lbs per day of 100% biodegradable plastic made from crop waste. The Vincennes-based plant will be the first purpose-built facility in the world to produce biodegradable plastic at scale. The 196,000 square foot plant will ship bio-based plastic pellets to finishing plants, where they will be transformed into a variety of finished products, including plastic bags, hard plastics, straws, and single-use packaging.

In his remarks, Founder & CEO Brian K. Southern highlighted several key dates for facility operations: Hiring for plant leadership, science, and engineering roles will begin in late summer for an October anticipated start, followed by hiring for the majority of plant positions later in the year. He also noted that phase one of construction is targeted for completion in the first quarter of 2025, with the first test products rolling off the assembly line shortly thereafter.

Construction of all three phases is expected to be complete in 2026, though the company will begin producing and shipping product in 2025. When operating at max capacity, the plant will employ more than 300 and will ship 300,000 tons of biodegradable plastic pellets annually.

The AgroRenew plant represents the most significant economic development project in Knox County in nearly a decade, according to Chris Pfaff, CEO of Knox County Indiana Economic Development.

"This investment not only highlights our commitment to sustainable development but also promises to invigorate our local economy," says Pfaff.

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"AgroRenew's presence in our community will position Knox County as a leader in the bioplastics industry with potential to attract further investment and solidify Knox County's reputation as a hub for innovative, eco-friendly industries. We are excited to support AgroRenew in its mission to drive progress and sustainability in our region."

Vincennes Mayor Joe Yochum beamed with pride during his remarks at the podium as he said he always knew great things would come out of The Pantheon.

"This venture not only underscores our city's commitment to innovation but also promises to bring substantial economic growth," says Yochum. "With the unwavering support of our city officials and the industrious spirit of our residents, I am confident that AgroRenew will thrive and set a benchmark for environmental responsibility. Together, we are building a brighter, greener future for Vincennes."

Remarking on the impact for growers was Brady Mouzin of Mouzin Brothers Farms, who sits on the board of directors of the newly formed AgroRenew Growers Limited, a co-op representing farmers who will sell crop waste to AgroRenew.

"Current standard procedure is that the farm incurs a cost or pays someone to dump the product if it doesn't meet grade A fruit and vegetable standards, so this is going to provide an opportunity for us to either do that at a cost neutral way or even make a profit off of this," says Mouzin.

Beyond the direct economic impact of construction and new jobs, however, the project represents a once-in-a-lifetime win-win-win, both economically and environmentally, according to Southern.

"I'm still blown away when I reflect on the transformative potential of this company," he said. "Of course we're thrilled to create career-track employment opportunities in Knox County and to create a product that will mitigate the global plastic crisis, but there are two other facets that make this a perfect storm of progress. First, we're solving an economic problem for growers by buying unharvested crops that would otherwise rot in the fields, and secondly, we're preventing millions of tons of crop waste from degrading and releasing methane gas into the atmosphere, further contributing to climate change. The impact – economically and environmentally – is staggering. It seems too good to be true, but it isn't. And this is just the beginning."

To sign up for construction and hiring updates, visit AgroRenew.org.

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About AgroRenew

AgroRenew is an industry-leading bioplastics processing manufacturer of biosourced plastics. Founded in Vincennes, Indiana, AgroRenew is committed to creating, developing, and producing 100% biodegradable plastics sourced from a blend of crop food waste, cover crops, and other biosource material. AgroRenew is a company of transformation. Through the challenge of creating revolutionary products, we expand the limits of possibility and become ever-better versions of ourselves.

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