



## Brewers believe Pérez is more than a chip off the old block

SPORTS, 2B



# GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE

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**“The cow’s milk is worth more than its poop, but the poop is worth a lot.”**

**Aaron Smith**, agricultural economics professor at the University of California-Davis



Construction of a dairy cattle manure digester facility is underway at BC Organics in Greenleaf. The Brown County plant will be one of the largest dairy cattle manure digesters in the nation and will process more than 360 million tons of manure a year into methane gas that’s put into a utility company pipeline. It’s scheduled to start operation this summer.

CHELSEY LEWIS AND MIKE DE SISTI/THE MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

## CASHING IN ON COW MANURE

### State’s largest dairy farmers are making money by converting methane from manure into natural gas

**Rick Barrett**

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel  
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

There’s a new cash cow on dairy farms these days, and it’s threatening to put milk in the back seat, so to speak.

Some of the nation’s largest dairies have installed anaerobic methane digesters that convert manure gas into fuel used to run vehicles like buses and trucks. The digesters have become a profitable sideline for farms seeking additional ways to use millions of gallons of livestock waste.

“The cow’s milk is worth more than its poop, but the poop is worth a lot,” said Aaron Smith, an agricultural economics professor at the University of California-Davis.

At some point, Smith said, farmers essentially

could be farming the methane from a cow’s manure rather than its milk.

“This fact should make us pause,” he said. Large subsidies have been paid to capture methane gas from manure that would have contributed to global warming. “But what if the farmer adds cows because of the subsidy? Then we are no longer paying to reduce emissions.”

Wisconsin has 318 methane digesters, including around 50 on dairy farms, according to the state Public Service Commission. Most are at wastewater treatment plants, landfills, food manufacturers and industrial sites.

Wisconsin has more methane digesters than nearly any other state, according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data.

See **MANURE**, Page 8A

## London game has cost

### Businesses will miss income from losing a Packers preseason game

**Richard Ryman**

Green Bay Press-Gazette  
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

Green Bay area businesses would rather not lose a Packers home game, even a preseason game, but a return to the playoffs would take the edge off.

The Packers are scheduled to play in London during the 2022 season, their first international regular-season game. As a result, they will host only one preseason game, instead of two, and eight regular-season games at Lambeau Field.

The Packers said from the start of the NFL’s international series in 2007 that they would not give up a home game to play abroad. They successfully held that line until the NFL expanded to 17-game seasons and made international play mandatory at least once over an eight-year period. The Packers

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## Pink Boots brew up help for women

**Daniel Higgins**

Green Bay Press-Gazette  
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

GREEN BAY – Octavia White IPA from Titledown Brewing Co. blends Green Bay’s brewing history with a special blend of today’s hops.

Whitney Froelich developed the beer’s recipe and led an all-women collaboration brew day with a bigger goal than making a beer that’s a twist on the IPA style — \$1 of each pint sold goes to a nonprofit organization that helps more women join the brewing workforce.

The beer’s namesake is Octavia Van Dycke, who owned O. Van Dycke Brewing from 1881 to 1908.

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# Manure

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mitigation technology and committed to spending more. But citing hundreds of complaints, local officials suspended the facility's operating permits after only about two years of operation.

## Why is manure so controversial?

Much of the reason cow manure has become controversial is the changing nature of dairy farming.

Manure has been a dependable and potent fertilizer for as long as cows have grazed the land. In moderation, it's part of a balanced ecosystem and doesn't create hazardous amounts of pollutants.

Managed cattle grazing, where the cows poop on the pastures while chewing on the grass, actually helps create habitat for native wildlife, according to Grass Works Inc., a Wisconsin nonprofit that promotes the practice of cows getting most of their nutrition from grazing.

When cows graze intensely in one area, and then are moved to another pasture until the next grazing cycle, it reduces the spread of invasive shrubs and restores diverse native plants. It also provides manure for invertebrates, which are then eaten by birds and other animals.

But you hardly ever see dairy cows on pastures anymore, said Mark Kastel, founder of Organic Eye, a nonprofit that monitors the organic foods industry. Many farms have such a large number of cows, the amount of pasture they'd need for grazing might mean the cows would have to walk several miles back to the barn for milking.

Incentives and subsidies for large farms, where the cows never set foot on grass, have created an unequal playing field in dairy, according to Kastel.

Wisconsin still has dairy farms where the cows are in pastures much of the year. But they're usually small operations that produce organic milk, where grazing is a requirement to be organically certified.

Otherwise, "Farming in a sound environmental manner puts you at a competitive disadvantage," Kastel said.

## Wisconsin well-positioned for future

For years, methane digesters have been used to generate electricity that's sold to utilities. But often the amount that farmers were paid fell to the point where it was no longer profitable for them. Also, some of the digesters installed years ago were unreliable or not managed properly.

Fortunately, the technology has greatly improved, said Josh Meissner, a Clark County dairy farmer and board member of Edge Dairy Cooperative.

Meissner said he's planning to transition his farm's digester from producing electricity for Dairyland Power Cooperative to participating in the California carbon credits program.

"The saving grace for the industry is there's always going to be a renewable product that's marketable. There's no doubt in my mind that our future is pretty secure," Meissner said.

But some of the incentives and subsidies could disappear, said Smith, from UC-Davis.

The EPA is revising its renewable fuel requirements and California's program only guarantees that a digester will receive credits for 10 years.

There are "boom and bust" cycles in biofuels, said Hardy Sawall, director of business development for U.S. Gain, a renewable fuels company in Appleton that's partnered with more than a dozen Wisconsin farms on methane digesters.

"We're in a growth cycle right now," Sawall said.

Tax credits and grants proposed in President Joe Biden's "Build Back Better" agenda could bolster the market for digesters. Also, in addition to California, other states have considered incentives to drive the demand for renewable natural gas and reduced emissions.

A growing number of large companies, like Walmart and Amazon, have invested in carbon credits to offset their own greenhouse gas emissions.

They can buy credits from places like landfills and dairy farms that are working to reduce their emissions.

Wisconsin is well-positioned to benefit from the changes, said Joe Pater, director of the Office of Energy Innovation at the Public Service Commission.

Wisconsin has awarded grants and incentives for around 40 digesters over the last 10 years. State officials say there's room for approximately 1,300 more facilities serving a variety of markets and purposes.

# London

Continued from Page 1A

will meet their obligation this season.

Regular season games provide an estimated \$15 million economic impact to the local economy. Preseason games have a smaller impact overall, and how they affect individual businesses depends on the services the business offers.

"It's a whole different demographic that goes to that game. It's a lot of kids. The impact is maybe one-fifth of a regular-season game," said Jess Miller, an owner of The Bar in Ashwaubenon, Graystone Ale House in Ledgewood and Hagemeister Park in Green Bay.

Preseason games lost favor with football fans during the last few years, so much so that the Packers cut ticket prices for those games to make it easier for season ticket holders to find buyers. As a result, those games tend to be more attractive to families, who prefer the more relaxed atmosphere.

For regular season games, more than 80% of fans live 50 miles or more from Green Bay. Preseason fans tend to be more local, and there are fewer of them. Preseason game attendance is about 7,000 less than for regular-season games.

Tim Kuehn, owner of Margarita's Famous Mexican Food & Cantina in Ashwaubenon, thinks preseason games have about three-fourths the impact overall as a regular season game, but he suspects the spending might be more widely distributed.

"It's still a huge weekend. I think sometimes for these preseason games people come into town for the weekend, they go enjoy Bay Beach (amusement park) or go up to Door County," he said.

Business owners seem to be taking the situation in stride, recognizing that the 17-game schedule means more regular-season games in the future, said Brad Toll, president and CEO of tourism bureau Discover Green Bay.

"What you are giving up this year, hopefully you gain in the coming years. People for the most part are looking big picture," Toll said.

Because of the unbalanced 17-game schedule, the NFC and AFC alternate hosting an extra regular-season game. In 2024, 2026 and 2028, the Packers will host nine regular-season home

games and one preseason game. If they play any additional international games during that period, and Murphy said they are open to the idea, it will be as a visiting team.

The local economy also would be helped if the Packers host one or more playoff games this season. Playoff games are a bonus. Smart businesses don't count on them, although they've become something of a repeat event here. The Packers hosted five playoff games over the last five years.

"Getting the playoff games is the bonus. Hopefully, they have a successful year and get a playoff game. Or two," Miller said.

Packers President and CEO Mark Murphy acknowledged the impact of losing a game after the London game was announced.

"We're going to try to have as many major events as we can going forward to help make up for this. One major thing that will be league-related is the (NFL) draft. Being able to have the draft come to Green Bay would be a tremendous economic impact," Murphy said.

Green Bay is one of three cities under consideration to host the 2024 draft. The others are Washington, D.C., and Detroit. Toll said local organizers are taking the approach of not if it will happen, but when.

Green Bay-area businesses continue to benefit from the ongoing rebound from the coronavirus pandemic. Last year was closer to normal in some respects after the severe disruptions of 2020, which also saw the Packers allowing no fans for games.

Fans flocked back to games in 2021, and also to restaurants, hotels and bars.

"Our 2021 was, from a sales standpoint, the most successful year we've had in the 18 years I've been here," Kuehn said.

Some businesses, Margarita's and The Bar among them, prepared for a return of customers with expansion projects even while the pandemic was slowing things down. Both built indoor/outdoor seating areas.

"People were definitely eager to get back out and attend games. The rebound was very good," Miller said.

Although Green Bay will give up a game this year, the long-term prospects provided by the city's exposure during a game in London are good, Toll said. International travelers are estimated to outspend domestic tourists 6-to-1.

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