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# We Energies' waste used to produce gypsum to help farmers

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## OAK CREEK, Wis. -

We Energies' waste is now being used to help grow local produce.

We Energies spokeswoman Cathy Schulze said the EPA changed the way the utilities does things.

### [VIDEO: We Energies' recycling effort huge for environment, huge for farmers](#)

"About 100 percent of our coal combustion products are recycled and reused," Schulze said.

Sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides used to be part of the steam leaving the Oak Creek power plant, ultimately causing acid rain.

Now, the utility company mixes limestone with those chemicals to produce gypsum.

Since 2008, We Energies has produced 1.4 million tons of gypsum. Sixty percent is used for wallboard, the other 40 percent is spread on farm fields.

"It helps flocculate soil to open it up for drainage, better infiltration. Air and oxygen gets in, which stimulates biology," said Gypsoil owner, Trevor Schuurman.

[Gypsoil](#) distributes the gypsum from We Energies to local farms.

"You want your soil to be real granular," farmer Daniel Craig said.

Craig's family in Mukwonago has been farming since the 1830s, and he said the clay soil isn't ideal for farming.

The gypsum acts as a fertilizer and reduces cost.

"By the time you buy the product, have it trucked, have it spread, you're looking at \$40 per acre," Craig said.

That is opposed to \$400 an acre for gypsum found in its natural state in mines outside of Wisconsin.

Other waste from the plant includes fly ash, which is used in concrete.

Several hundred tons of fly ash is now part of the new Northwestern Mutual foundation.