



Keshia Clukey

Reporter- *Albany Business Review*

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For Ecovative Design, a Green Island, New York company that makes packaging materials from mushrooms, more corn means more business.

A \$860,000 loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to R.M. Bacon & Rock Maple Farms LLC., a family-owned business in Rensselaer County, New York, will enable the farm to make more corn available for Ecovative products.

"Locally sourcing materials is extremely important to Ecovative because this allows us to keep our carbon emissions down, and supports local farmers by offering an additional revenue for something that would otherwise be waste," said Justin Frisino, Ecovative's vice president of materials supply.

Ecovative is a customer of Rock Maple Farms, in Hoosick, owned by Mike Bacon.

Bacon raises beef cattle, grows hay, produces sand and gravel, and operates a plowing and excavating business. He also grinds down his corn stalks and leaves to create corn stover, which is used in Ecovative's packaging.

"We don't want to see anything go to waste," Bacon said.

The corn by-products are used by Ecovative to grow biodegradable alternatives to foams and plastics. Mushrooms are used as a sort of epoxy holding it all together, Frisino said. The packaging is used by companies such as the computer manufacturer, Dell; office furniture industry supplier, Steelcase; and Crate and Barrel, a company that sells furniture and houseware.

Bacon announced Monday the opening of a second facility at 2112 Route 7 in Brunswick, owned by David Vanderzee of Vanderzee Financial, which will be used to store the corn by-product. Those materials are then shipped to customer facilities including Ecovative's Green Island manufacturing plant.

The loan will allow the farm owner to refinance debt and concentrate on expanding the processing and then storage of raw materials.

"That's the biggest struggle, it's just finding the funding and finding someone to believe in you," Bacon said.

Ecovative's Frisino said the short term goal of the farm expansion is to make more corn stover available through the local producer and the long-term goal is to use those materials to create new products.

Clukey covers money and technology.