

Pollution Prevention Strategy and Implementation Plan for Michigan Agriculture



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Over a period of many months, with input from a variety of stakeholders, the agricultural industry developed a *Pollution Prevention Strategy for Michigan Agriculture (Strategy)*. To fulfill their role and responsibilities in this effort, the Michigan Departments of Agriculture (MDA) and Environmental Quality (MDEQ) created an *Agricultural Pollution Prevention Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan)*. The work on these two documents was approved in January 1998.

THE STRATEGY GOAL

The goal of the strategy is to provide guidance to agricultural and environmental policy makers in identifying and implementing agricultural pollution prevention (AGP2) activities in Michigan. The strategy is accompanied by an implementation plan which lists specific recommendations to meet the objectives of the strategy.

THE STRATEGY

The strategy emphasizes overall impact on environmental quality (through pollution prevention) and agricultural financial viability. It is modeled after Michigan's Right to Farm Act, which attributes its success to:

- ✓ producer participation in the design;
- ✓ easy-to-implement, practical steps;
- ✓ voluntary participation and positive incentives; and
- ✓ use of P.A. 451 of 1994 as the basis for action against those who do not choose voluntary compliance.

The Strategy identifies five key components that comprise the foundation for an effective approach to agricultural pollution prevention:

- ① Building on programs that work.
- ② Coordinating nonpoint source pollution prevention programs.
- ③ Maximizing participation through incentives.
- ④ Targeting priority concerns, areas, and farms.
- ⑤ Increasing public awareness.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

An effective pollution prevention strategy for Michigan agriculture must emphasize partnerships, educational and technical assistance programs, and the abilities of farmers to solve and prevent pollution problems. The Strategy recognizes compliance with Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) as being a good-faith effort to comply with environmental requirements and recommends that this be taken into consideration in any regulatory or enforcement actions. It further recommends that other creative incentives be explored, such as tax rebates and low-interest loans. It advocates exploring alternate funding mechanisms to support agricultural organizations and expanding federal cost share programs.

Given limited resources, achieving maximum agricultural pollution prevention requires setting priorities. While all farmers should have incentives and opportunities to voluntarily participate in environmental assurance programs, technical and financial assistance needs to be targeted toward priority concerns, areas, and farms. The Strategy recommends that criteria be developed based on priority environmental concerns.

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Finally, increased coordination is the critical factor to maximize the impact of available resources and efforts involved in agricultural pollution prevention in Michigan. Collaboration among educational and research institutions, agri-businesses, agricultural producers, and government entities is essential to the success of the Strategy. It is recommended that the Michigan Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Quality direct the development of this unified statewide approach.

THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The plan defines agricultural pollution prevention as source reduction, reuse, or environmentally sound recycling and other prevention activities including nonpoint source approaches. The goal is to sustain a growing and vibrant agricultural economy in Michigan while effectively protecting the environment and human health. The *Agricultural Pollution Prevention Implementation Plan* was developed to provide a clear, overall approach to eliminate or minimize the release of agricultural pollutants in Michigan. This plan is a direct response to the *Pollution Prevention Strategy for Michigan Agriculture*. Emphasis is placed on strengthening existing activities and directing additional resources toward new activities and program areas. Stated objectives of the Implementation Plan are as follows:

- **Build on Programs that Work.** Utilize current programs such as The Michigan Right to Farm Act, the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, the Soil Conservation District Act, and The Michigan Groundwater and Freshwater Protection Act. As a main action item, the Michigan Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Quality will work with the agricultural industry to design and implement a voluntary, proactive environmental assurance option. The program will be adaptable, practical, and collaborative with commodity groups, the academic community, and government agencies.
- **Coordinate Pollution Prevention Programs.** Coordinate a statewide approach for addressing agricultural pollution prevention. The effort should include additional input and resources from the Michigan Commission of Agriculture, the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, agricultural producers, agri-businesses and the private sector. The Implementation Plan identifies a number of issues which should be considered in fostering pollution prevention.

- **Maximize Participation Through Incentives.** Recognize the value of compliance with GAAMPs, explore creative incentives, and promote farm-specific consultations.
- **Target Incentives: Priority Concerns, Areas, and Farms.** Focus pollution prevention resources on critical concerns, track and monitor nonpoint source pollution, and establish baseline conditions. Analyze results to identify progress and other pollution prevention opportunities.
- **Increase Public Awareness.** Coordinate information delivery efforts between public agencies and the private sector to improve the effectiveness of programming and ensure that information is adjusted to meet individual farm needs. The Implementation Plan lists a number of specific activities under this objective. They include: encourage development of local agricultural pollution prevention networks, sponsor conferences and workshops, support recognition programs, and produce articles for multi-media distribution.
- **Measure Progress.** Develop new methods to generate, collect, and analyze agricultural pollution prevention information. Benchmark and strengthen existing activities.

THE FOLLOW-UP

Over the next five years, members of the task force core committee will reconvene annually to report to the Directors of MDA and MDEQ. The committee will evaluate progress based on the number of agricultural pollution prevention requests received, case studies and fact sheets produced, conference or workshop attendees, participating stakeholders, and other quantitative data.

These evaluations will provide indirect measures of the effectiveness of agricultural pollution prevention activities in meeting the identified objectives of The Strategy. The status of these objectives will provide the grounds to direct remaining and additional resources to promising new activities and programs.

For more information or to request a complete copy of *The Pollution Prevention Strategy and Implementation Plan for Michigan Agriculture*, please contact the Environmental Assistance Division at 800/662-9278 or the Environmental Stewardship Division at 800/292-3939. This document can also be viewed at the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Environmental Assistance Division, web site: www.deq.state.mi.us/ead/p2sect/agp2.

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