Agriculture & Land Use: Preventing Conflicts Over the Expansion of Wisconsin's Livestock Industry

Final Report

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by
Wisconsin Environmental Initiative

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Principal Contact Person: Karl Bryan
Address: Wisconsin Environmental Initiative, 16 North Carroll St. Suite 840
City, State and Zip Code: Madison, WI 53703
Telephone: (608) 280-0360 Fax: (608) 280-0361
Web Site: www.wi-ei.org

Project Overview

The purpose of the project was to:

1) Bring together a broad group of stakeholders to objectively explore the issue of livestock expansion.
2) Assess the public's priority concerns regarding livestock production and expansion.
3) Produce consensus-based recommendations on how to improve the profitability of livestock agriculture while protecting Wisconsin's environment and quality of rural life.

Benefit to Wisconsin Agriculture

Although livestock farming is still the predominant type of agriculture in Wisconsin, is has been in decline for the past 20 years primarily due to the loss of smaller farms. Continued decline threatens the viability of our state's agricultural infrastructure.

Impeding the reinvigoration of the industry is heated public controversy over environmental and economic impacts of expanding livestock operations. These conflicts are highly divisive, with many different agricultural stakeholders in deep disagreement. This project is designed to move public policy beyond existing conflicts and identify solutions that will lead to improved environmental performance, new capital investments, job creation, and economic growth.

The project's Summary Report gives policy makers and producers alike an accurate documentation of current public perceptions of livestock agriculture, both positive and negative. This documentation lets stakeholders see what issues are important to the public. By identifying the issues, stakeholders can see where they can work cooperatively to address public concerns.

The Summary Report also provides an extensive set of recommendations. Their primary significance is in their consensus-based nature and the non-partisan process in which they were developed. Working groups were comprised of people with varying - in some cases opposing - interests. The report shows exactly what issues were or were not agreed upon. The Summary Report's recommendations provide all stakeholders a valuable starting point from which to base subsequent discussions and cooperative efforts.

Results

Project results fully met our expectations. The results consist of a day-long conference, the facilitation of three working groups, and the publication of a Summary Report.

I. Conference

This project kicked off with a day-long conference on December 16, 1998, in Wausau. The event convened over 150 members of the agricultural community for an objective look at the issue. A morning panel consisted of Ben Brancel, Secretary, DATCP, Jim Kurtz, DNR, Elton Aberle, Dean, CALS, UW-Madison, Larry Swain, UW-River Falls, and Mike Krutza, President, Farm Credit Services in Wausau. Afternoon presentations were made by Wisconsin producers and processors, and the Danish hog industry was explored as an international example of a highly profitable industry meeting rigorous environmental standards.

II. Working Groups

Working groups in three Wisconsin cities (Fond du Lac, Eau Claire, and Richland Center) were facilitated by Harry Webne-Behrman, of Collaborative Initiatives, Inc. Each group met three to four times from January through March, 1999. Thirty four people participated.

Discussions were characterized by a spirit of cooperation despite differences of opinion on certain issues. Groups explored issues thoroughly and established concise areas of agreement and disagreement. Each working group produced its own set of recommendations that are presented in their entirety in the Summary Report.

III. Summary Report

The *Animal Agriculture and Wisconsin's Future: Summary Report* was published in April, 1999. Nine hundred copies were distributed to project participants, state agencies, relevant committees of the Wisconsin Legislature, agricultural organizations, and interested members of the public.

The *Summary Report* consists of an executive summary, the detailed recommendations of the three working groups, and the documentation of current public perception of livestock agriculture.

The report also contains a Summary of Common Recommendations. These identify the issues upon which there was significant agreement across the three working groups. They are also presented below.

Summary of Common Recommendations

Environmental Protection

1. All groups believe that a regulatory system based on performance standards is preferable to NR 243. Such a system would set environmental thresholds and allow producers to meet them however they choose.
2. Most groups believe that thorough scientific research should precede the establishment of any new regulations pertaining to both odor and water quality. Research should include environmental and health risks, best management practices, and emerging technology. (Additional research topics not directly related to regulations include: less capital-intensive farming techniques, regional markets for livestock and expanding markets for manure.)
3. All groups believe that certification of farmers meeting environmental performance standards should be explored as an incentive for implementing best practices. Potential certification systems include a market-based or state-sponsored system.

Funding

1. Most, but not all, participants believe that financial resources and incentives should be provided by the government to help implement environmental best practices. Opinions varied about how funds should be allocated. Suggested options included giving existing farms or smaller farms priority over large, new or expanding farms, assigning no priority and sunsetting the availability of funding.

Education

1. All groups believe that extensive education on best management practices (for both odor and water) is needed for producers.
2. All groups believe that broad public education is needed in two areas: 1) the food system in general, 2) environmental practices that farmers currently use or are implementing to be good land stewards.

Future Activities

WEI has a strong interest in continuing the discussions started by this project. Currently, WEI staff is making presentations to various agricultural organizations about the project and Summary Report. In the upcoming months, WEI will evaluate the public impact of the report and consider opportunities for follow-up activities.

Animal Agriculture and Wisconsin's Future

SUMMARY REPORT

APRIL 1999

WISCONSIN
ENVIRONMENTAL
INITIATIVE

Contents

Animal Agriculture & Wisconsin's Future
Summary Report

APRIL 1999
WISCONSIN ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was funded in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

The Wisconsin Environmental Initiative thanks the members of the steering committee and the organizations they represent for actively participating in the design of this project and ensuring its integrity.

PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE:
Ron Caldwell, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
George Crave, Crave Brothers Farm
Margaret Krome, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
Jim Kurtz, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Fred Madison, Soil Science Department, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Ron Niemann, Prairie Oaks Farm
Adam Payne, Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association
Steve Pinnow, Pinn-Oak Ridge Farm, Wisconsin Pork Producers
Dan Poulson, Wisconsin Farm Bureau
Bill Wenzel, Wisconsin Rural Development Center

DISCLAIMER:
It should be noted that recommendations made in this report may or may not reflect the current policies of participating organizations

Report written by Karl Bryan, Program Director, WEI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the result of a project conducted by the non-partisan educational organization, Wisconsin Environmental Initiative (WEI). The purpose of the project was to:

1. Bring together a broad group of stakeholders to objectively explore the issue of livestock expansion.
2. Assess the public's priority concerns regarding livestock production and expansion.
3. Produce consensus-based recommendations on how to improve the profitability of livestock agriculture while protecting Wisconsin's environment and quality of rural life.

Working groups in three Wisconsin cities (Fond du Lac, Eau Claire, and Richland Center) were facilitated by Harry Webne-Behrman, of Collaborative Initiatives, Inc. Each group met three to four times from January through March, 1999. Thirty four people participated in the three groups (see Appendix A).

Discussions were characterized by a spirit of cooperation despite differences of opinion on certain issues. Groups explored issues thoroughly and established concise areas of agreement and disagreement. Each working group produced its own set of recommendations that are presented in their entirety. Most of the recommendations represent consensus on the part of the respective group members. The report notes issues where significant differences of opinion persisted.

WEI AS NEUTRAL FACILITATOR

Insights gained from this report can benefit all stakeholders; livestock producers, local and state government officials, University of Wisconsin and UW Extension staff, and members of the public. WEI believes that the value of this report is in the consensus-based nature of the recommendations and the non-partisan process by which they were developed. *WEI does not advocate any particular aspect of the report and does not seek to influence members of the public with respect to any of the report's recommendations.*

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

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SUMMARY OF COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS

Detailed recommendations of each working group are found in Section 1 of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1. All groups believe that a regulatory system based on performance standards is preferable to NR 243. Such a system would set environmental thresholds and allow producers to meet them however they choose.
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EDUCATION

1. All groups believe that extensive education on best management practices (for both odor and water) is needed for producers.
2. All groups believe that broad public education is needed in two areas: 1) the food system in general, 2) environmental practices that farmers currently use or are implementing to be good land stewards.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Although livestock expansion in Wisconsin is a multifaceted issue, some of the basic elements are identifiable:

EXPANSION

The trend in livestock production is toward producers increasing their numbers of animal units. University of Wisconsin research shows that most dairy expansions in the past five years have occurred at the 100-300 animal unit range.[1] The vast majority of livestock operations in the state are dairy, however this figure is indicative of other livestock types as well. Currently, Wisconsin has relatively few operations over 1,000 animal units. In 1998, Wisconsin had 65,000 livestock farms, of which 51 were 1,000 or more animal units.

The average size of Wisconsin livestock farms is 130 animal units. It's apparent that the 100-250 unit size will predominate for the foreseeable future.[2] However, long term development trends are difficult to predict.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The economic and environmental implications of various farm sizes are highly debated with Wisconsin producers divided over the issue. Some believe they ought to have the same opportunities for expansion that other industries have, and they are concerned that potential new regulations may impede their ability. Many also feel that smaller scale farms currently cause the majority of environmental pollution, and that larger farms have greater economic ability to implement effective environmental practices. Other producers feel that expansion will have severe negative economic and environmental impacts. They are concerned that expansions threaten the economic viability of smaller operations and threaten environmental quality.

LAND-USE CONFLICTS

Scattered, non-farm housing is being widely developed in areas of Wisconsin that have been predominantly agricultural in use. In the early 1980's most Wisconsin counties prepared farmland preservation plans that included the identification of rural areas with prime agricultural production characteristics. This planning was linked to exclusive agricultural zoning and tax incentives to property owners. These efforts have been controversial and have had varying degrees of effectiveness. Realistically, people examining livestock agriculture in Wisconsin need to assume that non-farm residential development will continue in areas of the state that have been predominantly agricultural in the past.

As demographics of rural communities shift, livestock producers are becoming a minority in many areas. Conflicts between livestock producers and non-agricultural development are rising. Many producers feel that pressure to change their practices is unjust, as it comes from relatively new members of their communities. Meanwhile, some members of the public, primarily new residential homeowners, find the odors produced by livestock operations disagreeable. While the public primarily blames larger farms for offensive odors, public attitudes are becoming more critical regarding producers of all sizes.

CURRENT REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

Currently, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is developing a draft strategy to reduce runoff from animal feeding operations. A final plan will be released in April 1999.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Department of Trade and Consumer Protection are developing Wisconsin's own strategy for the EPA to consider. Six separate working groups are developing various components of the strategy.

Manure Storage Ordinances have been established by 43 Wisconsin counties. Six other counties are planning ordinances. Some counties, like Trempealeau, have addressed odor issues in their ordinances.

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[1] Barham, Brad. 1998 "What is the future of Wisconsin's moderate scale dairy farms?" University of Wisconsin, PATS, Staff Paper No. 1.

[2] Ibid

SECTION 2: RECOMMENDATIONS OF WORKING GROUPS

WORKING GROUP COMPOSITION

Participants of the working groups were selected by the project steering committee (see Acknowledgments). Members represented broad interests including the following types of producers; beef-grazing, dairy-grazing, dairy-confinement, poultry, hog, diverse animal, and aquaculture. Members also represented the following; UW Extension, County Land Conservation Departments, local elected government, zoning administration, food processors, lending institutions, and citizen groups. Working groups met in three geographically distinct cities and the members of each group came from those respective regions.

Readers should be mindful that recommendations in this report differ from group to group. The three groups met independently of one another and intentionally did not share detailed proceedings with one another throughout the project. Each group began by identifying and prioritizing all of their concerns with livestock agriculture. Groups spent subsequent meetings identifying solutions to the concerns they felt were most important.

Eau Claire Working Group

AGRICULTURAL LAND PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION

As an industry, agriculture must assert the importance of protecting prime agricultural land, as well as environmentally sensitive areas. Sufficient land must be protected to preserve the economic infrastructure needed to produce food efficiently. Wisconsin's agricultural sector needs to be supported just as vigorously as the manufacturing industry has been in recent years.

1. Implement "Purchase of Development Rights" (PDR) programs to permanently protect agricultural land.[3]
2. Towns and counties should be given the authority to charge fees to developers for preservation of farmland elsewhere in the township. Wisconsin land-use laws with regard to such fees needs to be clarified.
3. Existing state programs that provide repayment of farmland preservation credits and tax relief for use-value should be targeted at programs that permanently protect agricultural land.
4. There should be coordinated advocacy for agricultural protection as a tourism resource.
5. Farmers need long-term assurances of land-use plans and zoning and permitting processes in order to make capital investments.
6. The "extra-territorial restrictions" authority of cities needs to be reviewed for its impact on agriculture.
7. The state should encourage urban redevelopment to ease the pressure placed on agricultural land by urban decay.
8. When establishing agricultural land protection and preservation programs, the following points should be considered;
   a. Prime agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas must be protected.
   b. Programs should protect (at least) the minimum area of land required for viable livestock production.
   c. Programs should be flexible enough to accommodate changes in agricultural use over time.
   d. Programs should accommodate use of marginal[4] agricultural land for non-agricultural development that does not threaten the viability of agriculture.
   e. Non-farm residential density in agricultural production zones should be defined and limited.
   f. Agricultural production zones should be established to provide farmers with security in their long-term planning for production and expansion.
   g. Right to farm protection should be maintained in areas that are designated for exclusive agricultural use.
9. Innovative solutions from other states should be explored, such as:
   a. Repurchase rights
   b. Strategies that link generational transfer with farm preservation
   c. Incentives for farming practices that protect the environment
   d. Tax incentives for conservation practices

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Wisconsin's livestock producers care deeply about environmental quality and desire to be thoughtful stewards of the land. However, low cost food often doesn't generate enough profit at the farm gate to implement environmental improvements. With respect to environmental protection, producers need clear standards of environmental performance that they can meet. As a whole, the livestock industry requires a framework that provides flexibility to adapt new technologies and practices to be competitive, a framework that supports and protects change in the industry.

1. NR 243, as a complaint-based regulatory system, is inefficient and troublesome. Complaints should be handled in a size-neutral manner, although responses to greater damage should be proportionate to problems.
2. Voluntary certification programs should be encouraged as a way of meeting environmental standards.[5]

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[3] Some members of the group felt that more information was needed about Purchase of Development Rights before they could recommend their implementation.

[4] "Marginal" means land not well suited for prime agricultural purposes, yet with some benefit to agricultural operations (e.g. supplemental grazing).

3. Success should be measured in the following terms;
   a. Water, odor and soil quality should be maintained or improved. Monitoring should occur on a sufficient basis to effectively measure change through time.
   b. Maintained or improved aesthetics
   c. Long term viability of farms
   d. Maintenance of rural quality of life
4. The USDA Soil Conservation Service Nutrient Management Standard "SCS 590 Standard" is an adequate tool to maintain the quality of surface and groundwater through nutrient management. It offers a standard and a set of practices that are a strong model for all producers, regardless of their size of operation. However, in its implementation, it needs to be more flexible and realistic, and less cumbersome than presently tends to occur.
5. Education and technology transfer need to be the cornerstone of efforts to achieve these standards. County government, UW Extension, and professional organizations should work as partners in this process and provide incentives for producers (e.g. Trempealeau Co. self certification nutrient management training; Pepin Co.).[6]
6. Public health concerns about odor and gases must be addressed. However, improved research and definition of scientific standards are required to set appropriate public health thresholds.
7. An equitable method of resolving conflicts over nuisance odor must be established.
8. Education of public and producers is required to improve understanding and management of odor.
9. Emerging technology for the control of odor and the handling of animal waste should be explored and its implementation encouraged.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Financial incentives that are "size-neutral" should be created to help producers implement environmental measures.

1. The following incentives could be developed:
   a. Soil testing fees to implement environmental measures
   b. Tax incentives for agriculture
   c. Tax incentives tied to voluntary conservation plans
   d. "Dairy 2020" program grants for producers and local processors
   e. Certification processes (e.g. Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program)
   f. Grants to support agricultural diversity
   g. Low interest loans
2. Producers and processors together should explore the potential of "supply chain management" to encourage environmental responsibility (e.g. Swiss Valley, Land O' Lakes, Wisconsin Pork Producers certification).[7]
3. The state should support the maintenance of existing local infrastructure and the development of new infrastructure that increases markets for diverse types of WI producers. The elimination of local infrastructure limits consumer choice and access to Wisconsin goods.

EDUCATION

Education about livestock agriculture's relationship to the environment is needed by a variety of stakeholders.

1. The public needs to gain a greater appreciation for the true cost of food and its safe production. The public also needs to gain a greater appreciation for the role agriculture plays in local and state economies and the impact global competition has on Wisconsin agriculture.
2. The public needs to be fully aware of current efforts by the agricultural industry and the state to develop environmental standards. The public needs to understand the value of the standards and that producers are striving to meet them.
3. Producers, processors and the public need education about innovative practices and programs that will protect the environment. Producers, processors and the public need to discuss "food security" issues including:
   - Ensuring sufficient yield/production
   - Ensuring nutritional value
   - Ensuring safety from contamination
   - Ensuring the viability of the local food system
   - Ensuring accurate food labeling

This discussion should determine the degree to which the risks to security could be managed as a cost of production and this discussion should also identify the roles and responsibilities of all parties in the food chain.

5. Public and private schools should explore their potential to communicate issues raised in this report. Environmental education courses should include awareness of these issues.

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[5] There was a lack of consensus regarding the role of government in voluntary permitting and certification processes. Three views prevail:
a. There is the fear that "voluntary" soon becomes "mandatory."
b. There is the view that"voluntary" is good and represents a sufficient alternative to mandated regulations.
c. There is the view that without mandated regulations, compliance with standards can't be enforced.

[6] Several examples were given by the group. They are not endorsed by the group, but are suggested as items for readers to investigate.

[7] Ibid.

Fond du Lac Working Group

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

AIR

1. Research on the public health risks associated with odor is necessary to establish the true threshold of risk. Specific research priorities include:
   a. Health risks
   b. Manure storage and handling (e.g. composting and lagoons)
   c. Aeration technologies and practices
   d. Odor reduction methods, economic feasibility of odor reduction, source identification
   e. Biological additives
   f. Spreading issues: topography, soil type, siting, distance from storage to application.
   g. Appropriate standards for setbacks; the impacts of "grandfathering"
2. Funding should be provided for unbiased research on odor. Research funds should be distributed fairly to support practices in a variety of farming contexts.
3. Research-based information about best practices for odor control should be organized and disseminated as quickly as possible.
4. Any future regulations suggested by research should be specific, realistic and based on credible science.

WATER

1. All farms, regardless of size, should have a manure management plan that includes measurement of nutrients and accounting of disposition. Farmers should work in partnership with local agricultural agencies to design, implement, monitor and improve these plans.
2. Manure management plans should be suggested by scientific research and should meet performance standards that adequately protect water resources.
3. Research should be conducted in the following areas:
   a. Markets for manure
   b. Phosphorous management
   c. Solid and liquid management
   d. Emerging technology
   e. Differential impacts of run-off on soil types, soil erodability, slope proximity to water, delivery, etc.
4. Any future regulations suggested by research should be specific, realistic and based on credible science.

REGULATIONS

1. Performance standards suggested by scientific research should be established and encouraged to reduce both odor emissions and water pollution.
2. New and expanding operations should not be issued local permits unless they submit management plans that meet performance standards.
3. The "carrot and stick" approach to regulatory enforcement needs to be realistically balanced. Citations and fines should focus on violations of public health standards, whereas education and technical assistance should focus on operations with social nuisance problems.
4. Local control should be emphasized in resolution of perceived air and water quality problems.
5. County Land Conservation Departments (LCD's) should be considered the "first response team" to perceived environmental problems. LCD's should involve the DNR as needed in order to solve problems through regulatory enforcement.
6. Where appropriate towns should address environmental problems and "subcontract" to the county for administration, education and technical assistance.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

1. It must be economically viable for farmers to conduct on-farm research and implement best management practices that meet performance standards for both odor and water. Therefore financial incentives and technical assistance should be offered. The following incentives should be explored:
   a. Tax breaks
   b. Cost-sharing (80/20)
   c. Public/private partnerships and grants
   d. Federal grants
   e. Independent consultants working with LCD's
2. State funds should be provided but allocation should be controlled locally.
3. State funds should be targeted towards fixing the greatest environmental problems. Existing farms at their current sizes should get priority in receiving financial support; expanding farms should get second priority; new operations should get third priority.
4. The financial responsibility for meeting performance standards should shift to producers over a reasonable period of time.
5. Lower cost alternatives should be encouraged wherever possible especially for smaller farms.
6. Certification of farms that meet performance standards should be explored as an incentive. Producers should be encouraged to pursue such certification and processors should be encouraged to buy from certified producers.

EDUCATION

1. State agencies, UW Extension, County Land Conservation Departments (LCD's), professional organizations, and others should cooperate extensively to present comprehensive education on best management practices to producers.
2. The goal of education should be the broad understanding of environmental problems and acceptance of solutions.

3. Extensive site-specific technical education is needed to ensure maximum understanding and implementation.
4. Farm shows, fairs, town meetings, etc. should be used to introduce solutions and encourage follow-up site visits. Computer-aided mapping should be used, where feasible, to focus the issue.
5. Awards and recognition for environmental practices should be given at agricultural events.
6. Broad public education on these issues should be provided for policy-makers, news media, youth and the general public. Education should come from a variety of sources including marketing campaigns, public meetings, local press, etc.

Richland Center Working Group

Protection of Wisconsin's surface water, ground water and air is a top priority of this working group. Thankfully Wisconsin has not experienced livestock related environmental problems to the degree that some other states have. Nevertheless we feel that environmental issues related to livestock production are significant enough to warrant immediate attention. Unless action is taken to solve current and anticipated environmental problems they may spiral beyond our capacity to manage them.

We believe that these problems are temporary and can indeed be solved, and that environmental solutions need to bridge the chasm between "principle" and "practice." We recognize the potential for some of our suggested solutions to adversely affect some people, however, they are not intended to present an insurmountable barrier for anyone. We are vitally interested in the profitability of the industry and believe that issues of equity and fairness must be addressed effectively.

WATER QUALITY

1. A performance-based system of environmental standards and enforcement should be defined and implemented for livestock agriculture. This system should include the following components:
   a. Realistic and manageable administrative requirements especially for small farmers.
   b. Uniform compliance with these standards regardless of size.
   c. Phased in implementation of standards for operations under 1,000 animal units.
   d. Immediate compliance required for operations over 1,000 animal units.
   e. Evaluation and monitoring:
      - 1999 data should serve as a baseline.
      - Long-term goal should be to meet federal fishable/swimable waters standards by 2010.
   f. Enforcement
      - Counties should be responsible for periodic monitoring of compliance (vs. complaint-based reporting).
      - Sufficient funding for proper enforcement should be provided by the state.
      - Clear, specific consequences for non-compliance should be established.
   g. Standards should be applicable to all types of agriculture (i.e. including crop farming).
2. Environmental and technical standards and the regulations that enforce them should be consistent across the state. However, there should be local control over siting, zoning and other issues that consider use-compatibility, local planning priorities, and local social and economic concerns. It should be allowable for local standards to be more stringent than state rules if it's demonstrated that more stringency is warranted. This will account for the diversity of needs across Wisconsin.

3. Permitting of livestock operations greater than 1,000 animal units should be temporarily suspended until a performance-based system of environmental standards is enacted.

4. The state should implement nutrient management education and certification programs to assist farmers in meeting performance-based standards (e.g. pesticide applicator training). Training goals should be:
   - farmers understanding the problem
   - farmers making a personal commitment to solving the problem

5. Ongoing education programs should be implemented to teach producers about "best practices," such as those described in Manure Management Choices (UWEX: GWQ024) and Guidelines for Applying Manure to Cropland and Pasture in Wisconsin (UWEX A3392). Education should come cooperatively through UW Extension, counties, DATCP, agricultural groups, etc.

6. Implementation of the USDA Soil Conservation Service Nutrient Management Standards "SCS 590 Standards" should be improved. While the SCS 590 Standards are widely used and accepted, they have the following shortcomings:
   a. They are prescriptive, not performance-based
   b. They lack adequate research that validates their protection of the environment
   c. They lack enforcement provisions
   d. They lack adequate financial resources and incentives
   e. They lack adequate education

AIR QUALITY

1. Standards should be established and enforced in Wisconsin for control of livestock odor and gas emissions and for aerial application of manure. (e.g. Minnesota guidelines for Hydrogen sulfide)

2. Air quality management plans should be required for permitting of all expansions.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

1. Limited-term funding should be made available for manure management. A sunset clause for funding sources should be established.

2. Environmental standards should be met regardless of whether or not cost-sharing is available.

3. The following financial incentives should be explored and expanded to support manure management:
   a. A state certification program "green stamp" for compliance with standards that may create new markets for producers of premium food.
   b. Tax breaks for facility improvements
      - Sliding scale of credits and incentives should apply for farms under 1,000 animal units.
      - Maximum threshold of 1,000 animal units.
   c. Tax breaks for continued implementation and certification for compliance standards.
   d. Other tax incentives
   e. User fees from certification program
   f. Required bond for environmental control structures to cover failure or abandonment
   g. Indemnity fund (e.g. Iowa)
   h. Fuel tax diversion
   i. "Consumer sales tax" on food
   j. Tobacco settlement money

4. Lenders should use comprehensive manure management plans as a basis for making loans for upgrading and expansion of facilities.

SMALLER PRODUCERS

1. Smaller less-concentrated farms should be supported as vehicles for:
   a. The preservation of cultural knowledge
   b. The protection of biodiversity
   c. The protection of smaller communities as economic bases

2. Smaller producers should be targeted for subsidies, loans, property tax relief and other financial incentives. They should also be targeted for research, education and other support services. Examples include:
   a. Research on rotational grazing and other less capital-intensive techniques
   b. Establishment of a family farm retirement fund
   c. Increased marketing
   d. Greater resources from UW Extension
   e. Creation of new marketing methods
   f. Establishment of several coop packing plants that encourage local and regional markets

3. DATCP should shift its policies from recruitment of corporate producers to the support of smaller and mid-sized producers (gross revenues less than $500,000). Emphasis should be on maintaining viable small and mid-sized farms without major expansion and through less capital-intensive techniques.

4. The Department of Commerce, UW Extension and farming groups should shift their focus to supporting smaller and mid-sized producers.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

1. Agricultural policy should include a strong public education component. The public should understand the agricultural system better as well as the particular environmental problems and solutions, and the roles of various stakeholders.

SECTION 3: STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF LIVESTOCK AGRICULTURE

Working groups identified perceptions of livestock agriculture that are commonly held by stakeholders including the general public and producers. The perceptions identified by all three groups are presented together in this section. Many, but not all, of the perceptions are common to all three groups. Perceptions listed do not represent consensus by members of the groups, rather they reflect various opinions of individual members.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. Expanding operations may harm water quality through leaching, run off, or spills.
2. Expanding operations may harm air quality and cause respiratory health problems.
3. Uncontrollable odor poses a significant risk, especially in large operations.
4. Increasing efficiency and output too much may reduce livestock health and food nutrition.
5. Currently best practices for nutrient management are not followed widely enough.
6. Outside corporate ownership may mean less environmental responsibility because corporations may not be liable for environmental damage.
7. Specific air and water quality problems have not been identified clearly enough; producers don't know what performance is expected of them.
8. Odor related issues in particular are poorly defined.
9. The size at which a livestock operation is considered a major risk has not been determined.
10. Not all farms are suitable for expansion yet most farmers feel they should be allowed to.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

1. Expansions and corporate ownership of farms may hurt local economies and smaller farmers because:
   a. Large-scale livestock operations may displace more jobs than they create.
   b. Vertical integration may produce unfair competition and reduce market access for smaller producers.
   c. Corporate farm profits may go to outside investors .
   d. Corporate farms may be less likely to do business locally.
2. Expansions could cause neighboring land values to drop.
3. The erroneous view that expansion is necessary to achieve "economies of scale" is widely held. Research has demonstrated that smaller herds are optimal.
4. Many producers do not have the financial resources to implement environmental best practices.
5. Manure management technology is too expensive for most farmers to afford.
6. "True costs" (environmental, social and economic) of expansion are not counted in the current agricultural economic system.
7. Waste management costs have not been internalized.
8. Manure is not valued enough as a resource.

OTHER ECONOMIC ISSUES

1. Small scale farming is at risk of becoming economically unfeasible.
2. Producers do not control their markets.
3. Food prices are too low and don't reflect food's high quality.
4. Farmers don't have enough economic incentives to produce higher quality food.
5. Producers don't define and measure food quality as much as they could.
6. Organic agriculture lacks the government support it needs to become established to the degree that consumers demand.
7. Cost-sharing grants are not always applied equitably.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

1. Public perception of farmers is negative and inaccurate.
2. The public has little understanding of agricultural economics or the relationship between production and cheap food.

LAND-USE CONFLICTS

1. Livestock expansions and urban growth together contribute to the rising number of conflicts between producers and residential homeowners.
2. Expansions cause significant conflicts among agricultural producers.
3. Urban development pressure is raising property values.

CURRENT REGULATIONS

1. The DNR's permitting of expansions is not stringent enough.
   a. Farmers often take advantage of the relaxed process, applying for a permit after they have already expanded.
   b. Farmers are allowed 1-2 years to create manure management plans after they have expanded.
   c. The public feels shut-out of the public hearing process.
2. Current regulations are not performance-based.
3. The current complaint-based regulatory system is reactive and antagonistic.
4. Local, state and federal regulatory standards are inconsistent. They should be consistent across jurisdictions and over time.

5. Setbacks/zoning requirements are inconsistent.
6. Local units of government do not have appropriate control over regulations and standards.
7. State agencies have not coordinated their policies on expansions.
8. Current regulations don't encourage clear labeling of food.
9. Producers don't initiate scientific analysis and set standards themselves as much as they should.

FUTURE REGULATIONS

1. Regulations may not be cost effective and may hurt smaller farmers.
2. Regulations may be less effective than manure management guidelines and economic incentives.
3. Regulations may not address specific problems and may be burdensome to non-polluting farmers.
4. Regulations may not be flexible enough to account for geographic variations.
5. Regulatory changes may not provide reasonable transitions periods; they may not allow stakeholders that have already invested in experimental technology to carry out their programs without penalty.
6. Regulations may need to be flexible to allow for more rigorous standards for very large farms.

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS

EAU CLAIRE WORKING GROUP

Paul Adams
Adams Dairy
Eliva, WI

Bob Dummer
Dummer Farms
Holmen, WI

Lynn Harrison
Elk Mound, WI

Paul Hetke
Ladysmith, WI

Diane Kaufmann
Poultry Producers Marketing Cooperative
Chippewa Falls, WI

Dick Kruschke
New Richmond, WI

Dan Masterpole
Chippewa County Land Conservation Department

Tom Quinn
Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy
Menomonie, WI

Mike Tiry
Chippewa Falls, WI

Steve Tschanz
Blaire, WI

Dick Vatthauer
Consortium of Animal Agriculture - Resource Development
Madison, WI

Bill Waldvogel
Chetek State Bank
Chetek, WI

FOND DU LAC WORKING GROUP

Scott Barnes
Rushing Waters Fisheries
Palmyra, WI

George Crave
Crave Brothers Farm
Waterloo, WI

Lee Cunningham
Walworth County Cooperative Extension
Elkhorn, WI

George Engel
New Holstein, WI

Marvin Fox
Kaukauna, WI

Gerald Jaeger
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Campbellsport, WI

Larry Lemmenes
Alto Dairy
Waupun, WI

Samuel Miller
M&I Bank
Appleton, WI

Steve Pinnow
Pinn Oak Farms
Wisconsin Pork Producers
Delavan, WI

Bob Rosdil
Maple Leaf Duck Farms
Franksville, WI

Richard Ryan
Lodi, WI

Tom Ward
Manitowoc County Land & Water Conservation Department

Bill Wenzel
Wisconsin Rural Development Center
Monona, WI

RICHLAND CENTER WORKING GROUP

Richard Cates
Co-Owner, Cates Family Farm
Coordinator, Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy Farmers
Spring Green, WI

Paul Dietmann
Sauk County Cooperative Extension
Baraboo, WI

David Fahey
The Bank of Brooklyn
Brooklyn, WI

Alan Harvey
Chair, Windsor Township
DeForest, WI

Tim Kabat
Sauk County Planning & Zoning Department
Baraboo, WI

Ron Leys
Wisconsin Stewardship Network
Gays Mills, WI

Ronald Niemann
Prairie Oaks Farm
Blanchardville, WI

Dan Patenaude
Highland, WI

Debra Schwarze
Richland Center, WI

Our Mission

The Wisconsin Environmental Initiative is a non-advocacy educational organization serving as a catalyst for cooperation among business, citizen groups and government to facilitate outcomes for the benefit of Wisconsin's environment, economy and quality of life.

WEI Staff

John Imes
Executive Director

Connie McElrone
Director of Development & Communications

Karl Bryan
Program Director

Board of Directors

Richard Lehmann, Chair
Boardman, Suhr, Curry & Field

Brian Ohm, Vice Chair
Urban and Regional Planning
University of Wisconsin

Timm Speerschneider, Secretary
DeWitt, Ross & Stevens, S.C.

Dave Cieslewicz, Treasurer
1,000 Friends of Wisconsin

Dan Barthold
Miller Brewing Company

John Berrigan, Jr.
Barr Engineering Company

Thomas J. Boldt
Oscar J. Boldt Construction Company

Noel Cutright
Wisconsin Electric Power Company

Tom Estock
Quad/Graphics Inc.

Erika Kent
The Nature Conservancy

Bill Malkasian
Wisconsin Realtors Association

George Meyer
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Nick Neher
Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection

Dave Shultz
Earth Tech

For more information on becoming a WEI member please call 608.280.0360 or email: wei@itis.com

WISCONSIN ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE

Wisconsin Environmental Initiative
16 N. Carroll Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
Tel: (608) 280-0360
Fax: (608) 280-0361
email: wei@itis.com
website: www.wi-ei.org