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Large Farms & their Impact

In many states, large farm operations are causing massive air and water pollution problems. Because of this, many states are currently adopting new regulations and innovative measures to combat the problems. At the same time, federal policy is being developed to include regulations for concentrated animal feeding operations.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency has recently produced the Compliance Assurance Implementation Plan For Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. The plan includes seven steps:

1. strong State and Regional compliance/enforcement partnerships;
2. effective State-specific compliance/enforcement strategies;
3. productive, coordinated compliance assistance activities;
4. strong compliance monitoring program;
5. effective enforcement;
6. better data/information on CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) for targeting compliance assistance and inspections;
7. plans for developing a feedback mechanism to the EPA, States and other Federal Agencies.

These steps are integral in protecting the environment, but can only work if states and the federal government and agencies all cooperate. Both the New York Times (3/6/98) and the Chicago Tribune (3/6/98) have recognized this plan as the next major step in regulating large-scale farms.

Many states are currently producing and adopting plans to deal with pollution, particularly in the water, from large farm operations. South Carolina, for example, has a particular watershed that houses over 15,000 beef cattle, 4,800 dairy cattle, 2,800 swine, and 1,000,000 poultry that produce around 75,000 tons of waste annually. To improve water quality in the area, a watershed project coordinated effort among federal, state, and local agencies and landowners to improve water quality in the water shed. Using a Geographic Information System, authorities could inspect operations and work with landowners to bring facilities into compliance with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control regulations. The project also installed best management practices, like the construction of new agricultural waste lagoons, and proper land application. Results two years into the project showed that water quality samples showed large decreases in nutrients entering the lake. Also, the program saves farmers from investing \$20,000 in equipment by renting pump-out equipment to farmers to keep their lagoon levels in compliance with regulations (<http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/info/NewsNotes/issue46/nmf46.htm#d>)*.

Like South Carolina, North Carolina is also implementing best management practices. One county in North Carolina has one of the highest swine populations in the United states, but the Herrings Marsh Run Demonstration project, funded by the USDA and managed by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, the NRCS, and the Farm Service Agency, in conjunction with local agencies and agribusiness's, has promoted the composting of dead birds, and the usage of waste byproducts from livestock and poultry operations as fertilizer (<http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/info/NewsNotes/issue48/nmf48.htm#a>)*.

Kentucky, in 1994, passed the Agricultural Water Quality Act. The Act requires best management practices for all farm operations larger than ten acres. Also, the Act will establish a fifteen-member panel to carry out various

tasks like examining water quality data, evaluating best management practices, and developing a statewide best management practice manual. After its upcoming five-year evaluation, this plan should show improved water quality with the implementation of these numerous best management practices (<http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/info/NewsNotes/issue47/nmf47.htm#b>)*.

West Virginia is another state in which actions are being taken to regulate large farm operations. In 1993, the West Virginia Poultry Water Quality Advisory Committee was created under the sponsorship of federal, state and local organizations. This committee, in an effort to address non-point source impacts on water quality in the state's easternmost counties, encourages poultry farmers to develop nutrient management plans. In training sessions, soil testing, litter nutrient analysis, spreader calibration, mortality management, litter application rates, and appropriate storage methods are all emphasized to protect water quality in the area (<http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/info/NewsNotes/issue47/nmf47.htm#d>)*.

Sources

- *Compliance Assurance Implementation Plan For Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations*. United States Environmental Protection Agency: Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.

- Cushman, John H. Jr. 3/6/98. Pollution by Factory Farms Inspires Industrial Approach to Regulation. *New York Times*: p.A10.

- Millman, Nancy. 3/6/98. Farms to Get Rules for Animal-waste Disposal. *Chicago Tribune*: sec. 1, p.10.

* Information on these states from web sites cited above comes from different issues of an Environmental Protection Agency publication entitled *Nonpoint Source News-Notes*.

Completed by Group # 2

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