

NASDA's 2002 FARM POLICY INITIATIVE
WORKING DOCUMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
JULY 2000

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U.S. Agriculture Profile PRODUCTION - ISSUE DESCRIPTION	Tools to Succeed - Policies & Options	Comments/Recommendations
<p>Management Skills <i>(The Marketing and International Trade Committee has lead responsibility for this issue)</i> Successful farming requires a solid management foundation. Training resources and programs should be made readily available for producers.</p>		

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<p>Environmental Resources *Water (quality and quantity) *Land *Air</p>		
<p>There are numerous opportunities to increase the ability of producers to address environmental risks and impacts in farm operations. Constraints in doing this include: on-farm regulation, increased costs for farmers, lack of federal resources, limited research and monitoring data/information, costs of technology. The Climate Change Kyoto Treaty and other international agreements may result in a competitive disadvantage for US and shift production.</p>		

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<p>Resource Management Planning USDA Secretary Dan Glickman and the administration have proposed a \$1.3 billion Conservation Initiative as part of the FY2001 budget. It provides new and additional funding for conservation programs that “help farmers take steps to protect water quality and the environment and preserve farmland.” The centerpiece of the initiative is a new \$600 million Conservation Security Program (<i>outlined below</i>). The initiative also expands and increases funding for five ongoing conservation programs.</p>	<p>NASDA policy generally supports efforts to conserve and manage lands to improve environmental resources with emphasis on providing incentives, technical and financial assistance through voluntary programs.</p> <p>NASDA policy 7.1 and 7.2 establishes foundation principles for cooperative partnerships, sound science, property rights, environmental assurance, and confidentiality of data.</p> <p>Other policy options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-farm environmental assessments. • Cost-benefit analysis for environ regulations. • Compensation for unfunded mandates. • Establish State Revolving Fund (SRF) for nonpoint source pollution. 	
<p>Conservation Planning/Resource Management The Administration’s Conservation Security Program (CSP) or “green payments to farmers” will provide annual payments to farmers and ranchers who implement various practices that meet the standards developed and approved by NRCS. Payment levels would depend on the range and comprehensiveness of the practices implemented. Eligible practices would include residue or nutrient management, prescribed grazing, and partial field conservation practices such as buffers. No specific program details have been described yet. NRCS is currently drafting legislation. The program would be funded by the CCC at \$600 million annually which will cover both security payments and technical assistance costs.</p>	<p>NASDA has no specific policy on the proposed Conservation Security Program or the general concept of “green payments” to farmers.</p>	

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<p>Highly Erodible Lands Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) The CRP reduces soil erosion, protects the nation’s ability to produce food and fiber, reduces sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establishes wildlife habitat, and enhances forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filter strips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of a multi-year contract. Cost-sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices.</p>	<p>NASDA has no specific policy on the CRP; but generally supports the program through NASDA Policy 7.2 Foundation Principles and Policy 7.3 Resource Management Plans and Technical Assistance.</p>	
<p>Animal Waste Management Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) The EPA/USDA Strategy on Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs) and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) is currently being implemented. The rulemaking calls on states to issue and enforce federal permits for large CAFOs and smaller units if they cause water quality problems. EPA is also developing effluent guidelines for CAFOs. There will be continuing efforts to permit or regulate certain animal feedlots and poultry operations.</p>	<p>NASDA Policy 7.3 Program Tools addresses Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs). Position generally supports flexible, voluntary, incentive-based programs, and “functionally equivalent” state programs. Policy also advocates additional funding and technical assistance for states.</p> <p>NASDA has submitted detailed comments on the AFO/CAFO Strategy and has conducted a state-by-state animal waste management survey.</p> <p>NASDA policy 7.3 also supports program “tools” such as incentives, technical and financial assistance through voluntary, best management practices and resource management programs. It also outlines goals for the Clean Water Act, including nonpoint source pollution, 319 program, and animal feeding operations.</p> <p>Policy options include developing a “functionally equivalent” program instead of requiring permits.</p>	

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<p>Nutrient Management Planning The EPA/USDA Strategy on AFOs/CAFOs includes requirements for states to develop and implement nutrient management plans. Guidance is under development.</p>	<p>NASDA has no specific policy on nutrient management, but has submitted detailed comments on the AFO/CAFO Strategy, including implementation of nutrient management planning. NASDA Policy 7.3 Resource Management Plans, generally supports nutrient management as a component of environmental assessments.</p>	
<p>Integrated Pest Management Pesticide Management Plans EPA has proposed rules regarding groundwater and pesticides that would transfer to State lead agencies the responsibilities for water quality protection and continued registration for five herbicides.</p>	<p>NASDA Policy 7.4 Pesticide Management Plans recognizes development and implementation of Pesticide Management Plans (PMPs) as primary tools to manage pesticides that threaten groundwater.</p> <p>NASDA Policy 2.4 (under jurisdiction of the Animal and Plant Health Committee) supports Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and outlines a set of principles for IPM guidelines.</p>	

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<p>Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) EQIP provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The program provides assistance to farmers for complying with state and federal environmental laws and encourages environmental enhancement. The purposes of the program are achieved through implementation of a conservation plan which includes structural, vegetative and land management practices on eligible land. Five- to ten- year contracts are made to implement one or more eligible or structural practices such as animal waste management facilities, terraces, filter strips, tree planting, and permanent wildlife habitat. Incentive payments can be made to implement one or more land management practices, such as nutrient, pest, and grazing management. Fifty percent of funding available for the program is targeted at natural resource concerns related to livestock production. The program is carried out in priority areas that may be watersheds, regions, or multi-state areas.</p>	<p>For 2001, the Administration has proposed to increase EQIP funding by \$151 million to \$325 million primarily to (1) address the President's Clean Water Action Plan by boosting the level of financial assistance available to operators of animal feeding operations; (2) to allow NRCS to increase financial assistance to Native Americans and Alaska Natives as part of the department's outreach efforts; and (3) to provide additional financial support for the recovery of salmon habitat in the Northwest.</p> <p>NASDA has no specific policy on the EQIP program; but, NASDA Policy 7.2 Foundation Principles and Policy 7.3 Resource Management Plans and Technical Assistance generally supports.</p> <p><i>Note: demand for assistance through the EQIP program has been higher than available resources.</i></p>	

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<p>Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) WRP is a voluntary program to restore wetlands. Participating landowners can establish conservation easements of either permanent or 30-year duration, or can enter into restoration cost-share agreements where no easement is involved. In exchange for establishing a permanent easement, the landowner receives payment up to the agricultural value of the land and 100 percent of the restoration costs for restoring the wetlands. The 30-year easement payment is 75 percent of what would be provided for a permanent easement on the same site and 75 percent of the restoration cost. The voluntary agreements are for a minimum 10-year duration and provide for 75 percent of the cost of restoring the wetlands. Easements and restoration cost-share agreements establish wetland protection and restoration as the primary land use. Landowners continue to control access to their land. The 1996 Farm Bill changed WRP to give producers the option of long-term or permanent easements, or restoration cost-share agreements.</p>	<p><i>Currently, the maximum number of acres that can be enrolled in the program is 975,000. By the end of 2000, there will be only 40,000 acres remaining that could be enrolled under this cap. For 2001, the administration's budget proposes to legislatively remove the acreage cap and enroll 250,000 acres annually. For 2001, this includes 40,000 acres remaining under existing authority as well as 210,000 acres under the new legislative proposal.</i></p> <p><i>NASDA has no specific policy. Previous policy recommended WRP level of at least 1.5 million acres by year 2000.</i></p>	

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<p>Wetlands Management Wetlands protection continues to be a priority for both Congress and environmental groups. The Clinton Administration's Clean Water Action Plan includes about a dozen action items to achieve a net gain of up to 100,000 acres of wetlands annually by the year 2005. Dozens of wetlands bills have been introduced to implement these policies or alternatives.</p> <p>The 1985 Swampbuster program is the main wetlands protection program designed for agricultural lands and remains controversial. NRCS has generally stopped making wetlands determinations, except on request because of the controversy, but estimates that more than 4 million sites eventually will require a determination. Swampbuster was changed in the 1996 Farm Bill to give producers more flexibility.</p> <p>Other programs dealing with wetlands and agriculture include the WRP, CRP, and CREP (detailed above).</p>	<p>NASDA Policy recognizes wetlands as valuable environmental resources. NASDA policy 7.7 addresses wetlands management and outlines numerous recommendations to reform and improve the Section 404 program, including using the best science to define and delineate wetlands, classification of wetlands, and encouraging non-regulatory, flexible programs.</p> <p>NASDA also participates in a Wetlands Coalition and has developed detailed legislative and regulatory proposals for wetlands reform, which generally supports NASDA policy statements.</p>	
<p>Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) WHIP is a voluntary program that provides cost-sharing for landowners to develop habitat that will support upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fisheries, and other types of wildlife. The cost-share agreement generally lasts a minimum of ten years. A total of \$50 million was authorized for the program in the 1996 Farm Bill and these funds were exhausted in 1999.</p>	<p>The administration has proposed new legislation to authorize an additional \$50 million in spending for WHIP in FY2001.</p> <p>NASDA policy generally supports WHIP and wildlife habitat improvement, but does not made specific recommendations on the WHIP program.</p> <p>Policy 7.2 Foundation Principles and Private Property Rights; Policy 7.3 Program Tools; Policy 7.6 Threatened & Endangered Species</p>	

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<p>Nonpoint Source Pollution Watershed Management The Administration and EPA have mounted a major effort to address nonpoint source runoff, particularly under the 1999 Clean Water Action Plan. Generally, the plan expands and strengthens regulatory efforts for nonpoint source management, water quality and resource management. These efforts and regulations challenge agriculture's traditional voluntary, incentive-based programs, and could force major changes in farming and livestock production.</p>	<p>NASDA Policy 7.3 Program Tools addresses nonpoint source pollution and advocates solutions based on voluntary, incentive-based, flexible programs using technical assistance, education, and good research.</p>	
<p>Clean Water Act Total Maximum Daily Loads EPA has proposed controversial rules that would regulate nonpoint sources under the TMDL and water quality program. The 1987 Clean Water Act Amendments included new provisions to address nonpoint source pollution through voluntary, incentive-based programs (Section 319).</p>	<p>NASDA policy reaffirms that EPA has no authority under the Clean Water Act to regulate nonpoint sources, and NPS should continue to be addressed through the Section 319 and other voluntary, flexible, state nonpoint management programs. NASDA policy is further communicated in comments on the proposed TMDL rule and in letters to Congress and the Administration. NASDA policy 7.4 deals with implementation of the Clean Water Act, including TMDLs, designated uses, water quality criteria, antidegradation, and costal zone management. Policy options may include new review of the CWA Section 319 to develop or update recommendations.</p>	
<p>Hypoxia EPA is leading an interagency task force to assess the causes and effects of hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. The task force is considering numerous options for management strategies to address hypoxia, including reducing nutrient loadings and fertilizer within the Mississippi River system and watershed.</p>	<p>NASDA has no specific policy statement on hypoxia. NASDA has joined a coalition of agriculture groups to provide comments on the task force assessments and reports. The comments generally focus on the need for sound science, evaluations of economic costs and benefits of reduced nutrient loadings, use of incentive-based strategies and programs, and calls for USDA to take a greater role in the task force activities.</p>	
<p>Safe Drinking Water Act Source Water Protection Groundwater</p>	<p>NASDA policy 7.4 addresses pesticide management plans for groundwater, which is also addressed under NASDA Policy 9.1 for Pesticide Regulation.</p>	

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<p>Endangered Species Act The Administration has continued broad-based efforts to expand endangered species protection and increase funding for wildlife restoration. Major initiatives are proposed under programs such as the Lands Legacy program, (outlined below) but the effort also shows up in many regulatory areas including USDA’s rulemaking on forest land roadless areas and EPA’s TMDL proposal.</p>	<p>NASDA policy 7.6 addresses threatened and endangered species and provides detailed recommendations for ESA reform, including definition of “species,” the petition and delisting process, and incentives for habitat recovery plans. NASDA Policy 7.2 Foundation Principles addresses private property rights.</p> <p>NASDA also participates in a broad-based coalition for ESA reform and has developed detailed legislative and regulatory proposals.</p>	
<p>Private Property Rights Protection of private property rights continue to generate interest due to expanding federal government land ownership, and other efforts to increase resource protection, land use requirements, and control sprawl and urban growth.</p>	<p>NASDA Policy 7.2 Foundation Principles supports private property rights and “just compensation” for takings. NASDA has also supported several legislative recommendations to protect property rights.</p>	
<p>Federal Land Management The Administration has taken broad efforts for management of public lands and practices, including logging, grazing, hunting, recreation, and other uses.</p>	<p>NASDA policy 8.1 - 8.4 deals with Federal Land Management, including grazing on public land, and federal wilderness areas.</p>	
<p>Lands Legacy Initiative The Administration has proposed a major \$1.3 billion initiative to address resource protection, sprawl, and growth management. The initiative primarily expands funding for a variety of conservation initiatives, including land acquisition to preserve “open space,” fish and wildlife conservation, recreation, farmland and ranchland preservation, national park protection, marine, ocean, and coastal protection, endangered species protection, forestry programs, and historic preservation. Legislation has also been introduced to increase spending for the Land and Water Conservation Fund that would be used for many of these activities. Opponents express concerns about weakened property rights, federal land use planning, and expanding federal land/resource acquisition.</p>		

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<p>Grazing & Range Management New regulations on livestock grazing on federal lands were implemented by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 1995. Many of the regulations have been challenged in court and may be addressed this year.</p>	<p>NASDA Policy 8.2 addresses grazing on public lands.</p>	
<p>Federal Wilderness Areas The Administration has undertaken broad efforts to preserve wilderness areas and expand resource protection.</p>	<p>NASDA Policy 8.4 addresses federal wilderness areas.</p>	
<p>Forest System Roadless Areas USDA recently proposed regulations dealing with forest system and roadless areas.</p>	<p>NASDA has no specific policy on this issue.</p>	
<p>Clean Air Act/Regional Haze/Particulate Matter Efforts are underway to tighten controls on emission standards for vehicles and fuels, control regional haze and particulate matter (dust, soot, etc.), which could have implications for agriculture and farming. EPA is currently considering air emissions rules for certain feedlots and the TMDL rule included provisions to control air deposition in waterbodies.</p>	<p>NASDA has no policy on Clean Air Act issues, although foundation principles and sound science policy are indirectly related to the issues.</p>	
<p>Global Climate Change Carbon Management/sequestration The Kyoto Climate Change Treaty would require reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide, and could have impact on agriculture operations. Several bills have been introduced in Congress to promote agriculture and forestry as a means to reduce carbon dioxide concentrations.</p>	<p>NASDA has no specific policy on climate change issues. USDA recently established a Climate Change Office to assess opportunities for voluntary reductions in greenhouse gases from agriculture.</p> <p>Policy options include proposals offered by Sens. Roberts and Brownback that would provide incentives to farmers for carbon storage in soils.</p>	
<p>Energy Biomass New Clean Air Act requirements, rising oil prices, and climate change have prompted new interest in biomass and alternative energy sources.</p>	<p>NASDA Policy 11.9 generally supports new uses for agricultural products, but does not specifically address biomass. NASDA adopted new policy this year in support of ethanol and renewal fuels. Several legislative proposals have been introduced in Congress to promote biomass research and products as a way to boost farm markets, improve energy security and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	

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Water Quantity Irrigation	NASDA policy 7.5 deals with water quantity, but does not address irrigation issues.	
Farmland Preservation Urban/suburban sprawl is an increasing issue. Goals of agriculture are to protect farmland, improve productivity and stewardship. However, federal proposals potentially conflict with state/local needs/concerns.	The Administration has proposed a Lands Legacy Initiative and a Livability Agenda to preserve green space through grants, bonds, and tax incentives. NASDA policy 7.3 addresses farmland protection and easements. One policy option is to eliminate state and federal policies that encourage sprawl.	

U.S. Agriculture Profile TECHNOLOGY - ISSUE DESCRIPTION	Tools to Succeed - Policies & Options	Comments/Recommendations
Research and Development New research priorities may be necessary to meet expanding goals for environmental protection, monitoring, production technologies, technical assistance.	NASDA Policy 7.3 Program Tools supports the importance, need, and funding for technical assistance. NASDA Policy statements 14.1 - 5 address agricultural research, extension and education, including legislative needs for agricultural research.	
Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Opportunities exist to improve productivity and stewardship through precision farming and other high-tech applications. Constraints include cost of equipment and technology.	Policy options include increased state and federal research and support for new production technologies and precision farming, and increased government assistance to enhance internet availability in rural areas.	