

FARM*A*SYST/HOME*A*SYST

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Abstract. The Georgia Farm Assessment System (Farm*A*Syst) is an interagency partnership that provides Georgia's farmers with information and a voluntary means to become environmentally pro-active in managing their farms and ultimately preventing pollution. This program, like the national program that it is modeled after, focuses on identifying potential sources of contamination, supplying information on corrective actions, and ultimately encouraging the farmer to formulate an action plan to address concerns.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the program are to provide a tool that will assist farmers and rural residents in identifying potential sources of ground or surface water contamination and supply information on corrective actions, to encourage Extension and other agricultural professionals to incorporate these assessments into their current programs, and to implement Farm*A*Syst at the county and watershed level.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In Georgia, the national program has been expanded to address additional environmental concerns such as surface water and air quality and to focus on all farm practices rather than just the farmstead. Georgia Farm*A*Syst consist of twenty individual assessments that focus on specific areas of Water Quality, Storage and Handling Practices, Animal Production, and Land Management. Each of these assessments can stand alone as an individual document or be used with other assessments pertinent to the farm being assessed.

To date, 15 assessments have been developed for the Georgia program:

- Improving Drinking Water Well Condition
- Improving Drinking Water for the Rural Resident

- Household Waste Water
- Management of Irrigation Systems
- Pesticide Storage & Handling
- Fertilizer Storage & Handling
- Petroleum Storage & Handling
- Hazardous Materials Storage, Handling & Waste Disposal
- Layer Production
- Broiler Production
- Composting Poultry Mortalities
- Dairy Production
- Managing Pests on Cropland & Pastures
- Site Evaluation
- Overall Assessment

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over 1,000 assessments have been distributed, resulting in completion of more than one hundred individual assessments. The results of a national survey conducted by the National Farm*A*Syst office concluded that Farm*A*Syst and Home*A*Syst are programs that are documenting impacts. Cost benefit studies show that within six months of completing an assessment, participants have, on average, committed nearly \$800 in time and resources to prevent pollution.

*Farm*A*Syst Today*, a quarterly newsletter that highlights the activities of the Georgia Farm*A*Syst program, has a subscription audience of over 300 farmers and agricultural professionals and can also be accessed through the World Wide Web.

PILOT PROJECTS

The program has been piloted by Extension professionals in Gwinnett County, the Gum Creek Hydrologic Unit (Crisp and Dooley counties), and in the Little River Rooty Creek Hydrologic Unit (Morgan and

Putnam counties). Currently Farm*A*Syst is partnering with USDA, NRCS, the National Farm*A*Syst office, and the Georgia Cherokee Nation to develop a water quality program specifically for this Native American audience .

TRAINING

Since January 1998, The Georgia Farm*A*Syst Program conducted seven trainings and trained 174 individuals who spent an average of 3.5 hours each (or 609 hours total). If you figure the average cost for these individuals time at \$10.00 per hour, this amounts to over \$6,000.00.