



**Acting Manager:** Steve Mahoney, 517-284-5620, mahoneys@michigan.gov

**Legal Authority:** Michigan Right to Farm Act, Public Act 93 of 1981, as amended

**Description of the Program:**

- The Right-to-Farm Program provides a common sense approach to investigate and resolve environmental and nuisance complaints involving farms in Michigan. Individuals with concerns about polluted runoff, excessive odor, or environmental issues associated with a specific farm may file a complaint for investigation with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD).
- MDARD investigates on-farm management of conditions, activities and/or materials relative to a set of science-based Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) developed by a technical advisory committee of stakeholders and agency representatives.
- If MDARD determines a farm is operating in conformance with the applicable GAAMPs, the farm earns an affirmative defense from a nuisance lawsuit. If changes are needed, farmers are advised to seek technical assistance through the Michigan State University Extension, the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service, conservation districts, and private consultants.
- About 1/3 of the complaints are not verified – i.e. based on MDARD's on-farm inspection, the farm is found to be conforming to applicable GAAMPs. Nearly all verified complaints are addressed by the farm implementing corrective practices to resolve environmental or nuisance problems in a timely manner. Unresolved cases may be referred to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) for enforcement under Michigan's National Resources and Environmental Protection Act.

**Why it Matters:**

- On-farm production agriculture is the foundation of Michigan's \$101.3 billion food and agriculture industry.
- Environmental performance on farms affects everyone's water quality, air quality, and overall quality of life in rural areas where nearly all farms are located. The economic success and social viability of farms depends on their productivity, environmental performance, and social compatibility.

**Key Stakeholders:**

- Michigan farmers
- Rural non-farm neighbors
- Local governments
- Commodity organizations
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- MSU Extension
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Michigan conservation districts

**Key Deliverables:**

- Timely environmental complaint response
- Consistent evaluation of on-farm practices
- Science-based farm management standards
- Conflict resolution
- Pollution prevention
- Efficient and effective on-farm resource management

**FY16 Accomplishments:**

- Timely investigation of new environmental complaints - average 4.63 business days first response.
- Follow up inspections to verify corrective farm management practices are implemented.
- On-farm environmental performance and pollution prevention practices maintained on farms.
- Common sense, science-based standards followed on farms and documented by inspections.

**Measuring Success:**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
New complaints received	154	137	117	137	133
On-farm Investigations	167	153	133	154	154
Initial on-site inspection within 7 business days (%)	91	75	89	89	87
Follow-up inspections	198	117	119	159	
Proactive inspection requests	13	16	16	7	9
Category determinations	N/A	N/A	3	16	12
<b>Resolution (%)</b>					
Not-verified	28	37	31	34	38
Abated / Open (needs follow up)	70	59	69	66	46
Withdrawn					6
Transferred / Referred to DEQ					5
Other – i.e. Not a Farm, Non-Conforms					5
<b>Resource Concern (%)</b>					
Air Quality	48	45	42	40	63
Combination	0	6	1	3	0
Groundwater	3	9	2	2	2
Soil	1	0	6	3	2
Surface Water	48	40	49	52	33
<b>Enterprise Type (#)</b>					
Livestock (typically dairy, beef, swine)	84	89	80	77	78
Equine					17
Crops	15	11	14	20	18
Poultry					10
Bees					5
Other – i.e. Composting, N/A	1	0	6	3	5

**Dashboards and Scorecards:**

The Right to Farm Program did not have an item on the departmental scorecard for FY16. Staff is working with MDARD's Director of Strategy and Business Performance to design measures toward this end.

**FY17 Goals:**

- Timely response to formal environmental complaints; initial on-site inspection within seven business days.
- Work with stakeholders to promote the implementation of applicable GAAMPs on all Michigan farms.
- Implement a new inspection data handling system with a revised database.
- Implement a revised records management system reporting process.