



Title: Applied Research Through Innovative Partnerships

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Organization: Cooperative Extension

State: WI **Region:** Great Lakes

Year of Funding: 2001

Theme: Water Conservation and Agricultural Water Management

Situation: Issues facing agriculture have changed. Development and implementation of applied research has received increased attention. On-farm systems research addresses environmental issues particularly effects of management practices on water quality, profitability and labor. UW-Extension developed a network of "Discovery Farms" representing a variety of viable agricultural enterprises operating in differing soil and physiographic settings in Wisconsin.

Objectives: Provide conduit between producers, researchers, agency staff, and government officials in production agriculture and its affects on soil and water quality. Integrate outreach and research activities focused on environmental management with evolving economic and regulatory programs. Develop and promote coherent ag policies consistent with sound nutrient management practices. Give researchers opportunity to work on farms in state to gain more understanding of varying types of farming systems used.

Methods: Discovery Farms has 3 divisions: Core Farms, Ed. Training, and Special Projects. Core farms involve on-farm water monitoring by USGS and implementation of BMPs to evaluate impacts on water quality, farm profitability and affects on labor and management. Ed. training works with counties on producer training for nutrient management and professional training for certified crop advisors, agency staff and other professionals. Special projects are shorter and involve intense study on specific practices.

Partnerships: Steering committee is representative of livestock, poultry, crops, marketing groups, environmental organizations and advisors representing state and federal agencies. Partners select farms, determine type of research and help bring financial support.

Research: Baseline data gathered by USGS and on-farm data collection, organized by Extension staff, involves researcher from College of Ag and UW-System schools. Producers, advisors, agency staff meet to determine changes in management practices with best opportunity to mitigate issues. UW-Discovery Farms speak at meetings of producer groups, work on issues identified by LCDs and NRCS. Improve communication between field staff and research community by developing fact sheets, publications and newsletter.

Resources: Partnerships developed by this program have provided the UW-Discovery Farms with a total funding package of 4:1 with other funding sources providing 4 times the Cooperative Extension commitment.

Results: Producers, agricultural and environmental organizations, state agencies, and agricultural businesses recognize Discovery Farms. Requests for involvement in special projects are greater than ability to deliver. Secretaries of Agriculture and Natural Resources couldn't come to agreement on establishing buffer regulations when finalizing state's non-point rules. They recommended the university work with Discovery Farms to develop on-farm systems research into acceptable buffer regulations.



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