



## **USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference**

### [Animal Agriculture and Environmental Solutions for the Shenandoah Valley](#)

Hundreds of thousands of excess tons of animal manure and poultry litter are produced annually in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, with much of it currently spread as fertilizer on crop fields and pasturelands. There has been increasing recognition that innovative solutions are needed both to solve existing water quality problems and to provide technologies for meeting future air and water quality expectations. A steering committee consisting of representatives from nearly 20 public and private agencies and organizations and facilitators from the University of Virginia's Institute for Environmental Negotiation worked over 6 months on the planning of a forum designed to identify the most promising strategies for addressing excess animal manure and poultry litter produced on Shenandoah Valley farms. Forum participants, comprised of approximately 80 university scientists, engineers, farmers, waste management facility operators, economists, conservationists, policymakers and government regulators, agreed on management options and alternative uses for manure and litter that hold the greatest practical and economic potential. A few of the priority approaches included: 1) piloting advanced feed management on dairy farms to reduce nutrients in the manure; 2) implementing manure processing demonstration projects to produce bio-based products, fertilizers and soil amendments, and fuels; 3) conducting training workshops on composting technologies; and 4) lobbying for increased state and federal funding for agricultural "best management practices" and innovation grants. The forum identified workable solutions, which build upon our current research findings, but also identified key questions requiring further study. It also achieved its objective of developing a collaborative action plan – with specific actions, timelines and responsibilities – that will not only assist Virginia's farmers but also improve Virginia's water quality. Funding for the forum was provided by about a dozen public and private agencies and foundations. A core group of forum participants, including members of the steering committee, has continued to implement the workplan developed during the forum.

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