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The Need for a New Approach to On-Farm Assessments, Tools for Environmental Education and Protection

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Abstract Text:

Several tools have been developed utilizing homeowner and farm owner assessments as a means to make property owners more aware of their impacts on the environment and the potential effects to their own health and property as well as the broader environment in which they reside. These assessment tools range in scope from self-assessments such as "Home Assist" and "Farm Assist" to more management intensive Environment Management Systems (EMS). In 1997 the National Environmental Dialogue on Pork Production recommended that technical and financial assistance could improve the environmental management of pork production operations. Since that time over \$30 million dollars have been spent to provide confidential, third party, on-farm, assessments and technical assistance to not only swine producers but to all major livestock sectors. Unfortunately, a relatively small number of producers have taken advantage of this opportunity. Therefore, a new approach is needed to increase producer participation and to target areas with identified water and air quality impairments. The overall goal of the proposed project is to heighten the livestock and poultry industry's awareness of the multimedia environmental impacts of animal production operations may have locally and regionally and provide the tools and expert services to help growers assess the role their sites play in nutrient loading to waters and, in turn, help mitigate their environmental challenges. The proposed project will include an outreach strategy to motivate producer participation, a geographically-based analysis to target the locations for assessments in areas that have the greatest environmental benefit, and the identification of incentives based on agriculture economic analysis, environmental regulatory and policy analysis. The proposed project will solicit producer viewpoints and rollout an ongoing communication strategy to set the stage, pique, and maintain interest with instruments such as a website, outreach literature, an 800 line, and presentations to the target audience.

Impact Statement:

This is a new project that will utilize exist WQ models and tools to identify priority watersheds in which to concentrate efforts to increase livestock producer participation in the voluntary environmental assessment and technical assistance program. By targeting watersheds with identified WQ problems and high numbers of animal facilities we hope to maximize the water quality impact of the project.