

Farm*A*Syst / Home*A*Syst

(Farm*Assessment*System / Home*Assessment*System)

Impacts Update 1999-2000

Safeguarding the Future One Farm or Home at a Time

We all affect the environment . . . just as it affects us. As keepers of the land and its resources, it's in our hands to prevent pollution and make sure that environmental hazards don't harm our families, our communities, or our children's prospects.

Since 1990, Farm*A*Syst and Home*A*Syst have pioneered the development of voluntary, confidential environmental assessments for farms, homes and rural properties. Participants complete worksheets to evaluate risks to their health and the environment, and consider better farm and home management practices. The primary objective is water pollution prevention, but each program embraces related topics. All states and some territories now have adapted Farm*A*Syst and/or Home*A*Syst materials specific to their constituents. Farm*A*Syst has been active in 46 states and Home*A*Syst in 38 states, though recent changes in funding have eroded capacity. In 1999-2000, participants voluntarily completed around 45,600 Farm*A*Syst and Home*A*Syst individual or packaged assessment worksheets. Outreach efforts reached more than 350,000 persons nationwide through county fairs, radio programs, direct mailings, workshops and presentations. Follow-up surveys suggest that more than two-thirds of participants have made or intend to make changes.

Farm*A*Syst and Home*A*Syst Change Potentially Polluting Practices

Studies in different states show farmers participating in Farm*A*Syst voluntarily spend between \$700 and \$5,400 each, including the value of their labor. Based on the lower figure, concerned citizens invested an estimated \$17.5 million in 1999-2000 to fix problems and prevent pollution in response to their assessments (25,050 were reported completed). An estimated \$120 million has been spent since 1990.



"It's more than an assessment tool, it's a teaching tool."

Phillip Roberts, University of Georgia

Oregon In 2000 and early 2001, Marion County hosted 21 Bilingual Water Well Clinics which reached more than 800 rural households. Most clinic participants tested their well water for nitrates and/or coliform bacteria.

Indiana In 2000, a detailed evaluation showed that Farm*A*Syst / Home*A*Syst outreach effectively raised awareness. More than 1/3 of participants made at least one activity change within 6 weeks of doing their assessments. Actions included pumping septic tanks, eliminating use of weed killer near wells, and placing farm chemicals in secondary containment.

Georgia In 2000, Rainbow Acres Farm received a Governor's Pollution Prevention Award in the Farmer/Producer category. Georgia Farm*A*Syst assessments were the building blocks of Rainbow Acres' environmental farm plan. The farm now gains the nutrient benefits of poultry litter on hay fields while protecting local surface and ground water.

Native American Nations On the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Reservation in northern Wisconsin, an educational campaign completed voluntary septic system inspections at 1,500 homes adjacent to three large lakes, and repaired or replaced about 10% that were failing. It also identified 40 underground petroleum storage tanks that required removal, and established 50-foot "No Fertilizer" zones adjacent to waterways.

Oklahoma A local paraprofessional assisted persons in historically under-served, minority communities to complete 116 homesite assessments, and collect 169 water samples for coliform analysis. Of the wells tested, 39% did not meet Safe Drinking Water standards, but 76% of these were improved when participants learned to conduct shock chlorination.

Nebraska Evaluation of a Livestock Systems Environmental Assessment tool, tested with 97 producers, found that 50% had made some changes within 6 to 9 months, and 64% intended to do so. 20 producers had invested more than \$1,000, and 5 had spent over \$5,000.

It's All About Partnerships

Collaboration among partners is what makes Farm*A*Syst / Home*A*Syst strong. At state and local levels, agencies and private sector groups work together to prevent pollution. Partners include:

Public

Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (CSREES)
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
State Cooperative Extension Services
State Departments of Agriculture, Health, Environment, Natural Resources
Local Townships
Land Grant Universities
Conservation Districts
Public Health Departments

Private

American Soybean Association
Groundwater Foundation
Groundwater Guardians
American Farm Bureau Federation
Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers
Lodi-Woodbridge Wine Grape Growers (CA)
Milk & Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Center, Inc.

Farm*A*Syst Home*A*Syst

Need more information? This brochure is a companion to the 1999-2000 Impacts Report forthcoming from the national Farm*A*Syst / Home*A*Syst office: 303 Hiram Smith Hall, 1545 Observatory Dr. Madison, WI 53706-1289; Phone: 608-262-0024; Web: www.uwex.edu/farmasyst/ (or /homeasyst; or /AgEMS)

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"Home*A*Syst demonstrates how the best programs are those which develop at the grassroots level, by the people who need them."

*Ann Lemley, Program Leader,
Water Quality Extension Program, Cornell University*

Program Highlights

- ❖ For 1999-2000, 39 states and the Virgin Islands reported using Farm*A*Syst in 256 separate projects. Among these were 67 state watershed projects, 56 community wellhead protection projects, 57 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or EQIP/livestock waste management projects, and 32 EPA Section 319 non-point source pollution projects.
- ❖ The Healthy Home Partnership -- a spin-off of Home*A*Syst -- established active programs in 33 states in 2000. To date, the program has distributed more than 85,000 copies of *Help Yourself to a Healthy Home: Protect Your Children's Health* (<http://www.uwex.edu/healthyhome>).
- ❖ Several prominent projects in 1999-2000 involved cooperation with private organizations. For example, the Lodi-Woodbridge California Winegrape Commission used Farm*A*Syst as a model and sought guidance from the program in producing the *Lodi Winegrower's Workbook: A Self-Assessment of Integrated Farming Practices*, released in 2000 (<http://www.lodiwine.com/IPM/index.htm>). Likewise, the American Soybean Association built its assessment Workbook and Best Management Practices Handbook (*Soybean Management & the Land*) with Farm*A*Syst support (<http://www.soygrowers.com>).
- ❖ State and territory programs have produced more than 500 Farm*A*Syst/ Home*A*Syst extension and private sector publications (see <http://cf.uwex.edu/ces/farmasyst/library/viewlibrary.cfm>).
- ❖ In 2000, Farm*A*Syst launched a four-year, multi-state initiative to expand the program into comprehensive Environmental Management Systems (EMS) for livestock producers. (See <http://www.uwex.edu/AgEMS/livestock>).
- ❖ The state programs use varied and innovative delivery methods. In New Jersey, mini-grants enabled local environmental commissions to disseminate Home*A*Syst to municipalities. Wyoming incorporated Home*A*Syst information into its Pesticide Applicator Safety Program. Georgia reached many homeowners via direct contacts by county Extension agents. Minnesota is distributing Healthy Homes in home-buyer and tenant education programs, nutrition education, Head Start and Hispanic parenting programs.
- ❖ Innovative applications of the worksheet/factsheet model around the U.S. have led to new programs and publications such as Stream*A*Syst in Oregon, Cotton*A*Syst in Georgia, Forest*A*Syst in North Carolina, Coast*A*Syst in South Carolina, Small Business*A*Syst in Alabama, the Veterinarian Project, and "Reducing Food Safety Risks in Apples" in Wisconsin, Food*A*Syst in Kansas, and Living in the Mat-Su (the Matanuska/Susitna valley) in Alaska.