



Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program

Program Summary

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) is an innovative, proactive program that helps farms of all sizes and all commodities voluntarily prevent or minimize agricultural pollution risks. MAEAP teaches farmers how to identify and prevent environmental risks and comply with state and federal environmental regulations. Farmers who successfully complete the three phases of a MAEAP system are rewarded by becoming verified in that system.

MAEAP was developed by a coalition of agriculture producers, commodity groups, state and federal agencies, and conservation and environmental groups. While the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) is the verifying agency, MAEAP is not a government or regulatory program but rather a partnership effort.

Systems

Michigan is one of the most agriculturally diverse states. As a result, a one-size-fits-all approach to environmental protection simply does not work on Michigan farms. MAEAP effectively overcomes this challenge by offering areas of concentration known as systems.

They are the:

- Livestock System
- Farmstead System
- Cropping System

Each system focuses on a different aspect of a farming operation. Producers can become verified in all systems applicable to their farm.

Phases

All MAEAP systems include three phases:

- Phase 1 – Education involves producer attendance at a MAEAP Phase 1 educational session or approved alternative program. Held across the state, these sessions introduce farmers to MAEAP and update them on new and emerging regulations and opportunities affecting agriculture.
- Phase 2 – On-farm risk assessment focuses on evaluating on-farm environmental risks and devising farm-specific corrective and economically viable solutions. Each MAEAP system implements a unique risk assessment tool developed to address the environmental impacts of that system.
- Phase 3 – Third-party verification, in which the MDA verifies that the requirements of Phase 1 and 2 are met, the state's Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs) are being followed, and the farm complies with state and federal environmental regulations specific to system requirements. MAEAP farms require MDA verification every three years. Verification in each MAEAP system requires meeting all three phases for that system.

Benefits for the Producer

MAEAP demonstrates that farmers are using environmentally sound practices, helping to foster positive community and neighbor relations.

The Michigan Right-to-Farm Act affords nuisance protection to producers who follow the state's GAAMPs. MAEAP is an effective way to meet the GAAMPs applicable to the Livestock, Cropping or Farmstead Systems.

MAEAP assures farmers have used effective tools for assessing and correcting environmental risks, and can help minimize enforcement penalties.

MAEAP verified farms are recognized as outstanding environmental stewards and are eligible for cost-share incentives, tax credits, low-cost lending and reduced liability insurance premiums from participating companies.

Benefits for the Public

MAEAP farms use environmentally sound practices to protect natural resources and build positive community and neighbor relations.

MAEAP is based on scientifically supported standards that allow farmers to address environmental concerns while remaining economically viable. The result is a program that helps farms continue to protect the environment and contribute to the economy.

Farmers respond best to voluntary programs like MAEAP and work hard to meet MAEAP's high environmental standards.

**For more information on MAEAP you can contact our office
or visit the MAEAP web site at <http://www.maeap.org>**