

Four Steps to Cleaner Hog Farming in North Carolina

A Framework for the NC Early Adoption Program to Help Farmers Move to Better Waste Systems

1. Enact legislation establishing an incentive-based Early Adoption Program.

Environmental Defense and Frontline Farmers propose that the NC General Assembly and NC Governor Mike Easley work together to pass legislation in 2006 that establishes an incentive-based Early Adoption Program designed specifically to reduce the cost of alternative hog waste technologies. The program would put better systems immediately on between 50 and 100 hog farms in North Carolina. The program would be open to individual farmers who volunteer to replace open-air lagoons with technologies that meet the environmental standards developed during the last five years under the Attorney General's Agreement. Farmers who volunteer to participate would be eligible for substantial financial assistance to defray the cost of better waste systems.

2. Tap existing sources for funding.

Environmental Defense and Frontline Farmers estimate the Early Adoption Program will cost at least \$20 million. Funding for the program could come from many potential sources:

- State appropriations
- Federal Farm Bill programs and/or other federal appropriations
- Golden LEAF Foundation
- Clean Water Management Trust Fund
- Participating farmers and the pork industry

3. Establish an Early Adoption Task Force to ensure practical results.

Legislation establishing an Early Adoption Program should create a new, dedicated entity to administer activities and ensure timely action and practical results. Environmental Defense and Frontline Farmers recommend that the Early Adoption Program be implemented either as an independent entity, or as an entity housed within the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Legislation would establish clear criteria for targeting and prioritizing funds in a manner that maximizes the likelihood of program success.

The Early Adoption Program would be directed by an *Early Adoption Steering Committee* that would include farmers, scientists, conservation groups, community groups, the pork industry, economists and others.

The duties of the Early Adoption Program would include:

- Identifying priorities for a voluntary Early Adoption Program. Goals would include implementing alternative technologies on farm types across the industry spectrum and linking clusters of farms to a centralized solids processing technology.
- Establishing criteria for participation. Criteria would include what farms to target, the funding support targeted farms should receive, and monitoring requirements.
- Identifying a schedule for adoption.
- Soliciting applications and grant funding.
- Ensuring that permits are issued to participating farmers in a timely manner.
- Working with state and federal cost share fund providers, especially regarding training on technical aspects of alternative technologies.
- Working with technology providers to reduce costs.
- Contracting with third-party waste handlers/transporters as needed.
- Working with collaborators to assess markets for waste byproducts, to facilitate development of those markets, and to recommend policies to remove obstacles to such markets.
- Monitoring the performance of the Early Adoption Program.
- Preparing a report for the Environmental Review Commission on policies that will provide the greatest benefits to the environment, communities and hog farmers.

4. Support the development of new markets for value-added byproducts.

New waste technologies have the potential to produce revenue from value-added byproducts, such as energy generation, fertilizer, soil amendments, soil-less media, compost and related products. Environmental Defense and Frontline Farmers recommend that the General Assembly specifically appropriate a portion of the funding within the Early Adoption Program for evaluating, promoting and developing markets for value-added byproducts. Based on the findings, legislation should be proposed to support new markets and, where possible, remove regulatory obstacles to such markets.

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Frontline Farmers is a nonprofit organization comprised of swine producers and their families in North Carolina.

Environmental Defense, representing more than 400,000 members nationally, links science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships to create breakthrough solutions to urgent environmental problems.