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National Strategy for Agriculture

I. Introduction:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is committed to protecting the Nation's food, water, land and air for generations to come. These are goals that are important to American farmers, as well. This National Strategy for Agriculture sets forth a framework in which to accomplish these important goals by:

- 1) Increasing the awareness and understanding within EPA of agricultural impacts and benefits to human health and the environment and working across media in a more systems approach to environmental protection;
- 2) Working with the agricultural sector – including production, processing and distribution – in developing and demonstrating environmental protection solutions that express the value of farmland environmental stewardship activities to the public;
- 3) Coordinating research and technology development and transfer so the needs of agriculture and EPA can be more efficiently met; and,
- 4) Identifying existing environmental measures and developing new ones, where appropriate, to demonstrate environmental improvement related to agriculture.

EPA's interaction with the agricultural sector will occur within the current programs and organizational structure of the Agency. Because agricultural operations tend to be multi-unit operations functioning as a system, their problems and solutions are often multi-media in nature. Our challenge will be to use existing authorities while crossing programmatic and organizational boundaries to help the industry address environmental protection concerns. A sampling of performance measures from the Agency's Strategic Plan have been attached at the end of this document to demonstrate the role that agriculture can play in protecting the environment.

Through this *National Strategy for Agriculture*, EPA will work in cooperation and collaboration with many stakeholders to encourage environmental protection solutions in agriculture.

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II. Vision

An environment where the agricultural sector is a source of environmental solutions and benefits contributing to and recognized for improvement of the Nation's environmental quality; where the Nation's agriculture is sustainable, economically viable and global in nature; and, where non-traditional, innovative and voluntary approaches are given equal opportunities for success with traditional regulatory approaches.

III. Implementation of Goals

A: The EPA Administrator, Assistant Administrators, and Regional Administrators will identify the impact of EPA's rules, policies, guidance, grants and other activities on agriculture as part of routine practice and, where appropriate, will coordinate these activities with USDA and/or other relevant parties. In the context of these rules and policies, senior EPA managers will work together across media and will identify the roles and contributions by agriculture for solutions to achieve greater environmental protection. The following objectives will be implemented to achieve this goal:

- a. Create a greater understanding of the Federal infrastructure for dealing with agriculture including production, marketing, economics, management, trade and other international agreements.
- b. Foster a holistic multi-media approach to environmental protection and public health relative to agriculture.
- c. Emphasize innovative and cost effective approaches to environmental protection.
- d. Use traditional approaches to environmental protection relative to agriculture where they are working effectively or where innovative, collaborative programs don't prove successful.

B. Work toward and demonstrate environmental protection with the agricultural sector through collaboration, innovative and voluntary programs, financial incentives, and traditional regulatory approaches. The following objectives will be implemented to achieve this goal:

- a. Develop a greater understanding of EPA's mission and programs and their impact upon production agriculture.
- b. Consider market strategies for conservation to bring about larger scale environmental protection and resource enhancement.
- c. Increase education, incentives and funding opportunities for agricultural compliance with environmental protection goals.
- d. Consider input from the agricultural sector in EPA rulemaking and strategic plans, in addition to other stakeholders already routinely involved.
- e. Enhance awareness in the agricultural community about agriculture's impact on the environment, EPA's program and regulatory activities,

and opportunities to interact with the Agency on issues of mutual concern.

- f. Continue development and maintenance of mechanisms and fora for improved communication with the agricultural community on all relevant agency actions at the national, state and local levels.
- g. Strive for greater use of collaborative efforts among state, local and other federal agencies for identifying and addressing agricultural and environmental priorities.
- h. Provide results, in collaboration with the research community, to the agriculture sector through outreach and web site publications.
- i. Embrace demonstrated innovative approaches to compliance (i.e., performance based programs) and demonstrate the effectiveness of these approaches, assisting with technology transfer as appropriate.
- j. Support research and development for technologies that will assist with environmental protection.

C. Develop an effective communication strategy and marketing network to better communicate with agriculture, assist with technology transfer and show environmental results. The following objectives will be implemented to achieve this goal:

- a. Increase communication on issues related to agriculture and the environment.
- b. Centralize and disseminate results from EPA funded projects and agreements so that research and technology development results are readily available to the public.
- c. Communicate proactively with the agricultural industry on emerging issues.

D. Identify existing environmental measures (see Attachment A for examples) and, where needed, modify them or develop new ones to demonstrate environmental improvements that are can be achieved through new practices or technologies. The following objectives will be implemented to achieve this goal:

- a. Identify and assess environmental improvements related to agriculture and, where appropriate, use performance measures similar to or in harmony with those used by USDA.
- b. Develop or improve environmental outcome measures which better capture all work related to agriculture or better reflect the environmental improvement the Agency needs to demonstrate. Such measures should include partnerships and collaborations such as cross media performance measures and measures which address the goal of coordinating research and technology development and transfer.
- c. Incorporate national and regional agricultural priorities into EPA's strategic planning processes while maintaining opportunities for local and flexible solutions for local challenges.

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Attachment A – Sample Performance Measures

Goals listed in the Agency Strategic Plan include contributions from all industrial sectors of which agriculture is one. Below are some examples of goals from the strategic plan whose accomplishment agriculture has the potential to contribute to and performance measures by which to measure them. Development of additional goals may be necessary to fully address contributions from agriculture to environmental protection.

Each of these performance measures has a component for which agriculture can contribute to attaining the goals. This can happen through a variety of EPA, USDA and other programs. Notable examples include the use of 319 funds to decrease nutrient loading on the Chesapeake Bay and Gulf of Mexico, development and implementation of nutrient management plans under the CAFO Rule, and the retrofit and electrification of diesel engines as part of the Agency's National Clean Diesel campaign.

Water Quality/Quantity Activities:

Performance measure: EPA will make water safer for swimming by implementing a three-part strategy to protect the quality of the Nation's recreational waters. *P.40. Objective 2.1: Protect Human Health. Sub-Objective 2.1.3: Water Safe for Swimming.*

Performance measure: By 2008, reduce levels of phosphorus contamination in rivers and streams so that phosphorus levels are below levels of concern established by USGS or levels adopted by a state or authorized tribe in a water quality standard in 30 percent of test sites for farmland streams (1992-98 Baseline: 25%). *P.41. Objective 2.2: Protect water quality. Sub-Objective 2.2.1: Improve Water Quality on a Watershed Basis.*

Performance measure: By 2008, working with partners, achieve a net increase of 400,000 acres of wetlands with additional focus on biological and functional measures. *P.94. Objective 4.3: Ecosystems. Sub-Objective 4.3.2: Increase Wetlands*

Performance measure: By 2008, reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loads entering the Chesapeake Bay from 1985 levels. *P.95 Objective 4.3: Ecosystems. Sub-Objective 4.3.4: Improve the Aquatic Health of the Chesapeake Bay*

Performance measure: By 2015, reduce releases of nutrients throughout the Mississippi River Basin to reduce the size of the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico to less than 5,000 km², as measured by the 5-year running average of the size of the zone. *P.95. Objective 4.3: Ecosystems. Sub-Objective 4.3.5: Improve the Aquatic Health of the Gulf of Mexico*

Air Quality Activities:

Performance Measure: By 2010, reduce mobile source emissions of nitrogen oxides by 3.4 million tons from the 2000 level of 11.8 million tons; volatile organic compounds by 1.7 million tons from the 2000 level of 7 million tons; and fine particles by 122,400 tons from the 2000 level of 510,550 tons. *P.13. objective 1.1: Healthier Outdoor Air. Sub-objective 1.1.1: More People Breathing Cleaner Air.*

Performance Measure: By 2010, working with partners, reduce air toxics emissions and implement area-specific approaches to reduce the risk to public health and the environment from toxic air pollutants. *P.13. objective 1.1: Healthier Outdoor Air. Sub-Objective 1.1.2: Reduced risk from Toxic Air Pollutants.*

Performance Measure: Outside the regulatory arena, work to reduce smog and greenhouse gas emissions by developing new cleaner technologies and promoting the use of those developed by others. *P.142. Cross Goal Strategies. Innovative Approaches for Achieving National Goals*

Prevent/Reduce Pesticide Risks

Reduce exposure to toxic pesticides.

Performance Measure: Through 2008, systematically review pesticides in the marketplace to ensure that they meet the most current safety standards: reregistration, tolerance reassessment and registration reviews. *P. 80. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.1: Reduce Exposure to Toxic Pesticides*

Performance Measure: Each year through 2008, protect endangered and threatened species by ensuring that none of the 15 species on the EPA/USDA/FWS priority list of threatened or endangered species will be jeopardized by exposure to pesticides. *P. 80. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.1: Reduce Exposure to Toxic Pesticides*

Performance Measure: By 2008, decrease by 30 percent the occurrence of residues of carcinogenic and cholinesterase-inhibiting neurotoxic pesticides on foods eaten by children from their average 1994-1996 levels. *P. 80. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.1: Reduce Exposure to Toxic Pesticides*

License pesticides meeting the latest safety standards.

Performance Measure: By 2008, at least 11 percent of acre treatments will use applications of reduced-risk pesticides. *P. 81. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.2 License Pesticides Meeting Safety Standards*

Performance Measure: Each year through 2008, expedite the registration of 4-6 new active ingredients that meet the criteria for reduced-risk pesticides or organophosphate alternatives to make safer pest management tools available sooner. *P. 81. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.2 License Pesticides Meeting Safety Standards*

Performance Measure: Each year through 2008, maintain the timeliness of Section 18 emergency exemption decisions. *P. 81. Objective 4.1: Chemical, Organism, and Pesticide Risks. Sub-Objective 4.1.2 License Pesticides Meeting Safety Standards*