

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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| DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION | | NUMBER: 9500-8 |
| SUBJECT: USDA POLICY FOR GROUND WATER QUALITY | DATE: November 9, 1987 | |
| | OPI: Assistant Secretary Natural Resources and Environment | |

1 PURPOSE

This statement documents and sets forth the policy of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to protect and enhance ground water quality.

2 BACKGROUND

Ground water quality is important to all Americans, and it is the intent of the Department of Agriculture to assure that its programs and activities reflect that importance. There exists evidence that the quality of ground water may be affected by contamination from many sources, including some occurring naturally and some induced by agricultural and silvicultural practices. The Nation's farmers, ranchers, and foresters have need to prudently use agricultural chemicals to provide the food and fiber necessary for improving the quality of life of all mankind, and to meet the needs of a growing population and an expanding economy.

This ground water policy statement is issued to improve the management, coordination, and effectiveness of USDA assistance to farmers, ranchers, foresters, State and local government agencies, and other water users in rural areas.

3 USDA GENERAL POLICY FOR GROUND WATER QUALITY

With the need to continue the prudent and sustained use of the nation's renewable natural resources, it is the policy of USDA to help protect water users and the natural environment from exposure to harmful substances in ground

water, especially in rural areas, and to enhance ground water quality where appropriate.

Accordingly, USDA will:

a Support the prudent use and careful management of nutrients and other agricultural chemicals in agriculture and silviculture with the objective of avoiding future ground water contamination. Where ground water quality enhancement is needed, foster alternative crop management systems, improvements in the management of nutrients and crops, and reductions in the use of chemicals as appropriate.

b Advocate and foster programs, activities, and practices that can prevent the harmful contamination of ground water from agricultural, silvicultural, and other rural sources to minimize, or make unnecessary, regulatory restrictions on the use of chemicals essential to agricultural production.

4 USDA POLICY FOR RESEARCH, INFORMATION-EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

a Continue to conduct and support research, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of: (1) factors affecting the movement of nutrients and agricultural chemicals in soils; (2) effectiveness of efforts to protect ground water quality, (3) procedures to predict the effects of changes in chemical management (4) effects of agricultural and silvicultural - practices on chemical movement in ground water; (5) economic benefits of agricultural chemical uses; (6) economic effects of various strategies to reduce ground water contamination; and (7) relative hazards to animal and human health of substances in soil and and ground water.

b Provide both nationwide and site-specific information, education, and technical assistance to private landowners to encourage them to use agricultural and silvicultural practices, including non-chemical methods of pest control, that can minimize the risks of ground water

contamination levels that are harmful to public health and the environment.

c Provide information and education to people and communities in rural areas about methods to maintain safe wells; to avoid local .contamination by pathogens, agricultural chemicals, other nutrients, and other substances; to obtain tests of ground water quality; and to treat their water to remove natural and artificial contaminants where needed.

5 USDA POLICY FOR COOPERATION AND COORDINATION

a Strive to assure that Departmental policies and programs are implemented in a manner that encourages agricultural and silvicultural practices that avoid harmful levels of contamination in ground water.

b Coordinate with state agencies, other federal agencies, manufacturers, and others to help ensure that they adequately consider the needs of agricultural and silvicultural land users to use nutrients and pesticides correctly to maintain productivity of soil, plant, and animal resources. Coordinate with and encourage agencies, manufacturers and others to help agricultural and silviculturlal land users, through technology transfer, to demonstrate how they may avoid or minimize adverse affects on ground water quality.

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