



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

We evaluated how the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Strategic Agricultural Initiative (SAI) uses performance measures to demonstrate results. We specifically sought to determine if SAI uses performance measurement tools and efficiency measures that provide for continuous program improvement.

Background

The SAI is a program that helps growers of minor crops replace high-risk pesticides phased out or restricted because of the Agency's pesticide reevaluations. Since 2001, the program has given out about \$4 million in grants. According to Agency staff, SAI fills a role within EPA's regulatory framework by helping minor crop growers transition to reduced risk and alternative methods of pest management.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2007/20070926-2007-P-00040.pdf

Strategic Agricultural Initiative Needs Revisions to Demonstrate Results

What We Found

The SAI program has not demonstrated how it fulfills its unique role of helping growers transition away from Food Quality Protection Act high-risk pesticides. The program does not have a strategic plan or similar documents that link project mission and goals, logic model, performance measures, and the data collected by the program. Headquarters and the regions have inconsistent priorities for implementing the program. This lack of structure makes it difficult to measure and validate results.

The SAI databases, which are used to gather data on project performance, lack definitions and structure, and thus contain incomplete and extraneous information. Therefore, the SAI program does not have performance measurement tools or performance measures in place to ensure or facilitate continuous program improvement.

What We Recommend

We recommend that EPA develop a needs assessment for the SAI program to demonstrate how it fulfills its role in meeting Food Quality Protection Act requirements. If the need is demonstrated, the Program Office should create a strategic plan which sets clear priorities for the direction of the program. For the SAI Projects database, the Agency should create guidance documents and establish standards and procedures for data collection and entry into these databases. SAI data and results should be accessible to grantees and other interested stakeholders. EPA agreed to reassess the need for the SAI program. If the SAI needs assessment demonstrates a unique need for SAI, EPA agreed to develop a strategic plan, based on logic modeling, that will address the issues identified in this evaluation and the SAI needs assessment.

These recommendations will result in approximately \$1.5 million in annual grant funds put to better use. This is because either the need for these grants will be determined to no longer exist or, if needed, their effectiveness will be enhanced following the creation of a strategic plan and associated goals, logic model, performance measures, and data systems.