

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		NUMBER: 1042-126
SUBJECT: Task Force on Agriculture Air Quality Research	DATE: December 20, 2010	
	OPI: Natural Resources Conservation Service	

1. PURPOSE

This regulation renews the Agricultural Air Quality Task Force (AAQTF). It is being renewed due to the requirement of section 391 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (FAIR Act), which directs the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to establish an advisory committee to address agricultural air quality issues. The Chief of NRCS is responsible for preparing the following charter under section 9(c) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, amended December 21, 1982.

2. BACKGROUND

The 1990 Clean Air Act requires the monitoring and controlling of particulates of size 10 micrometers in diameter and smaller. Many areas, particularly in the Western United States, experience concentrations of these particulates which exceed the 1987 Federal health standards.

The FAIR Act addresses Agricultural Air Quality Research Oversight. In section 391 of the Act, the United States Congress reports that:

- a. A number of studies have alleged that agriculture is a source of PM-10, PM-2.5, and Greenhouse Gas emissions;
- b. Many of these studies have often been based on erroneous data;
- c. Federal research activities are currently being conducted by the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to determine the true extent to which agricultural activities contribute to air pollution and to determine cost-effective ways in which the agricultural industry can reduce air pollution; and
- d. Any policy recommendations that may be issued by any Federal agency to address air pollution problems related to agriculture or any other industrial activity should be based on sound scientific findings that are subject to adequate peer review and should take into account economic feasibility.

The FAIR Act directs the Chief of NRCS to establish a task force to oversee and review research in agricultural air quality issues in order to ensure intergovernmental cooperation in research activities.

3. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATIONS

- a. The name of this committee is the Agricultural Air Quality Task Force.
- b. The AAQTF will be terminated 2 years from the date of renewal by the Chief of NRCS unless renewed.
- c. This regulation will expire 2 years from the date of filing. Departmental Regulation 1042-126, dated October 2, 2008, is superseded by this regulation.

4. OFFICERS AND MEMBERSHIP

- a. The Chief of NRCS will serve as chair of the AAQTF. The Task Force will report to the Chief of NRCS, who will present Task Force recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture.
- b. There are no legal limitations to the number of members who may serve on AAQTF.
- c. The AAQTF's membership is composed of representatives of academia, agribusiness, regulatory organizations, environmental organizations, health disciplines, special government employees (SGEs), and others. Additionally, several regular government employees (RGEs) are appointed because they are USDA employees whom the AAQTF is advising and whose expertise is required.
- d. Equal opportunity practices, consistent with USDA policies, will be followed in all appointments to the AAQTF. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership should include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

5. DUTIES

The AAQTF will advise the Secretary of Agriculture regarding the scientific basis of the impact of agriculture on air quality. The intent of this effort will be to:

- a. Strengthen vital research efforts related to agricultural air quality;
- b. Determine the extent to which agricultural activities contribute to air pollution;

- c. Determine cost-effective ways in which the agricultural industry can improve air quality;
- d. Coordinate and ensure intergovernmental cooperation on research activities related to agricultural air quality issues to avoid duplication and ensure data quality and sound interpretation of data.
- e. Advise the Secretary with respect to the role of the Secretary for providing oversight and coordination related to agricultural air quality.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION

- a. Members will serve without compensation, but may receive reimbursement for travel expenses and per diem in accordance with USDA travel regulations for attendance at board functions.
- b. Estimated annual operating cost of the AAQTF is not expected to exceed \$180,000.

7. NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The AAQTF is estimated to meet approximately two to three times annually.

8. REPORT/STAFF SUPPORT

NRCS will provide the necessary support for the AAQTF, and designate a federal officer to provide committee management as outlined in Department regulation 1041-1, 41 CFR parts 101-6 and 102-3, and required under sections 10(e) and 10(f) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.).