

## What's Ahead?

- ◆ IFBF will update and revise each of the 11 Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst publications. The 2nd Edition publications will be available for viewing or downloading off the Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst web site.
- ◆ IFBF and ISU Extension will each sponsor four on-farm trainings in 2003.
- ◆ Bi-annual partners' meetings will foster continued support, implementation, and funding opportunities.
- ◆ Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Nonpoint Source Management Program will contribute jointly to reprinting and distributing the Water Well Condition and Maintenance and Wastewater Management Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst publications.
- ◆ Iowa State University will collaborate with IFBF to update the Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst Pesticide Storage and Management publication with a record keeping section. Over 20,000 copies of the publication will be distributed through the 2002-2003 Pesticide Applicator Training program.
- ◆ ISU Extension will store and distribute the Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst materials through the Extension Distribution Center.
- ◆ An ISU Extension published brochure will summarize the Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst program and direct readers to specific publications.



"Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst fits well into our program strategy.

This is an excellent opportunity to cooperate with the private sector and fulfill our common goal of water quality education," *Dr. Jerry Dewitt, Director of ISU Ag & Natural Resources Extension*

Many thanks to the individuals from who have contributed time and expertise. Because of your help, Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst is a product Iowa can be proud of. We especially recognize...

- ◆ Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- ◆ Iowa Department of Public Health
- ◆ Iowa State University Extension
- ◆ Iowa Waste Reduction Center
- ◆ Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- ◆ Iowa Geological Survey
- ◆ National Soil Tilth Laboratory
- ◆ Focus group participants and farmers who hosted trainings

[www.ifbf.org/farmasyst](http://www.ifbf.org/farmasyst)

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# Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst

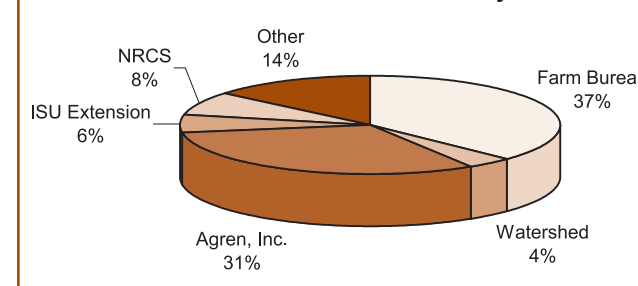
An Iowa Farmstead Assessment System

## Development and Impact Summary

April 1998 - September 2002

The Farm\*A\*Syst (Farmstead Assessment System) program pioneered the development of a voluntary, confidential environmental risk assessment for farmers, ranchers, and rural residents in nearly every state in the nation. The purpose of the Farm\*A\*Syst (FAS) program is water pollution prevention—particularly the protection of drinking water. In short, the FAS program helps farmers take a comprehensive view of their farm, evaluate on-farm risks to groundwater, and identify voluntary actions to prevent pollution.

Where end-users obtained Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst materials



Farm\*A\*Syst has proven to be an overwhelmingly effective outreach program, translating technical research information into easily understood, hands-on education that empowers citizens to take voluntary individual actions to prevent water pollution.

In Iowa, unlike every other state adopting the FAS program, private business took the initiative to develop an Iowa specific Farm\*A\*Syst program. Members of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF) Environmental Resources Advisory Committee recognized a need to invest the organization's resources into a proactive program that protects water. In 1997, IFBF applied through the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Federal Nonpoint Source Management Program to develop and implement an Iowa farmstead self-assessment program based on the Farm\*A\*Syst fact sheet/worksheet model. IFBF contracted with Agren, Inc., an Iowa-based agricultural and environmental consulting firm, to coordinate the Iowa assessment development and implementation process.

## The Path to Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst

### Development

- ◆ **Planning and review.** Interviews with the staff at the National Farm\*A\*Syst office and approximately 14 state Farm\*A\*Syst coordinators provided insight into the Iowa planning and development process. Program advocates in Iowa insisted that an essential element in an Iowa version include meaningful and directed references to Iowa law. Program partners determined the list of topics that would be covered by the program, and many agreed to provide technical assistance as the materials

were developed. The prototype Wisconsin version of Farm\*A\*Syst and the Ontario Environmental Farm

"Programs like Farm\*A\*Syst help, because they give farmers a new way of seeing things that they've worked around their whole life." *Roy Bardole, Farmer, Rippey, Iowa*

Plan program served as models for the Iowa farmstead assessment system.

(continued on next page)

## People Protecting Iowa's Drinking Water



## The Path to Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst continued

- ◆ **Focus groups.** A series of nine focus group interviews with 52 farm and non-farm rural residents were conducted in four regions across Iowa. Objectives for the focus group



interviews included: 1) Gauge attitudes about water quality issues; 2) Determine what people know about practices covered in the FAS materials; and 3) Gain insight on what is the best format and delivery method for Iowa FAS material. Participants provided valuable information that eventually shaped the format and some of the content of the Farm\*A\*Syst program materials. The focus groups established the necessity to rework the national model into

"Whenever I inspect a septic system, put in a new well, or do any type of well plugging, I always give them (the farmer) Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst. The materials are very thorough and accurate- obviously researched by professionals. It's a good tool for helping people understand how important protecting their drinking water is." *Tina Hamilton, Grundy County Environmental Health Specialist*

a more attractive and self-contained publication that could be used independently by rural residents. Emphasis was also placed on keeping technical terminology to a minimum and providing contextual definitions instead of a glossary of terms.

- ◆ **Technical review.** Over 30 professionals from across the state served on technical advisory teams for each of the 11 publications. Writers met with individual technical

advisory teams to discuss and determine critical evaluation points, secondary concerns, levels of risk, and references to Iowa law as they pertained to the topic. Advisory team members also had final approval of their respective topic/publication.

- ◆ **Partnering.** Early discussions with partners, including ISU Extension, Iowa Waste Reduction Center, IDPH, NSTL, NRCS, IDALS, GSB, and DNR provided guidance in determining the final list of publication topics and identified the technical advisory teams for the project. Commitments from these agencies provided invaluable resources for the project development.

### Awareness

- ◆ **Pilot testing.** A pilot testing phase served as a mid-point evaluation for development of the materials. Four watershed groups across the state served as pilot locations where draft copies of the Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst program were delivered directly to watershed residents. A telephone survey of end-users gauged the rural residents' views on the complexity of the materials, value of information provided, time it took to complete the assessments, and intended management changes.

- ◆ **Displays/presentations.** Word about the development and availability of Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst was spread through oral presentations and display booths at nearly 30 conferences, meetings, and seminars. Initially, Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst publications were disseminated in this manner as well. The audiences at these events varied widely from primarily academics at the Eighth International Symposium on Animal, Agricultural, and Food Processing Wastes to county sanitarians at the Iowa Onsite Wastewater Association tradeshow.

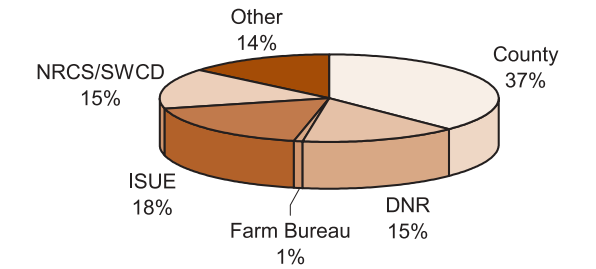
- ◆ **Web site.** The Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst web site, hosted by IFBF, allows visitors to view and download complete Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst publications in Adobe Acrobat format. Other features of the site include interactive electronic assessment forms with data aggregation capability, links and contact information to relevant agencies, and an email link to submit comments and questions directly to Agren.

### Implementation

- ◆ **Training.** 341 individuals have been trained on the Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst program on over 20 separate occasions. These individuals included farmers and rural residents, Iowa water quality professionals, local agricultural leaders,

and FFA students. Several interactive on-farm trainings allowed water quality professionals a unique opportunity to

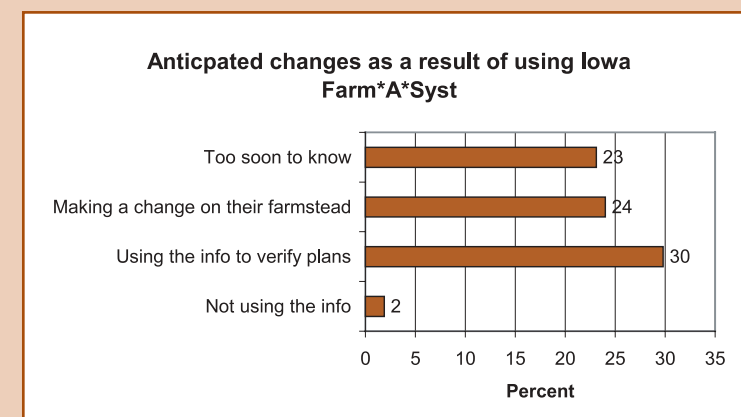
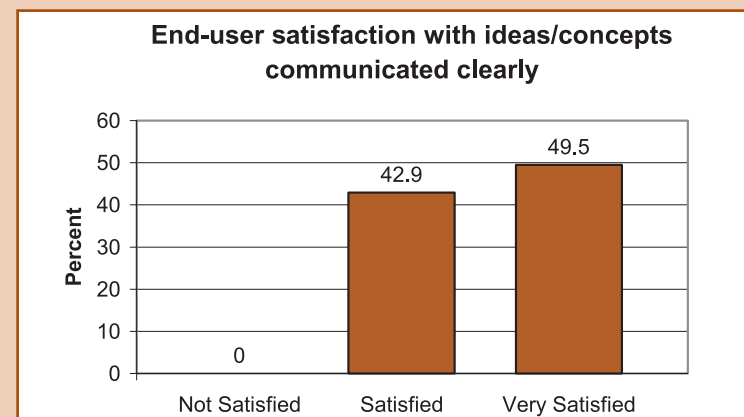
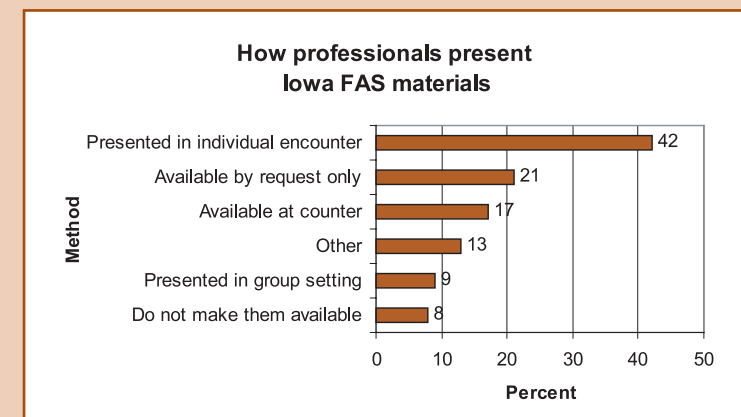
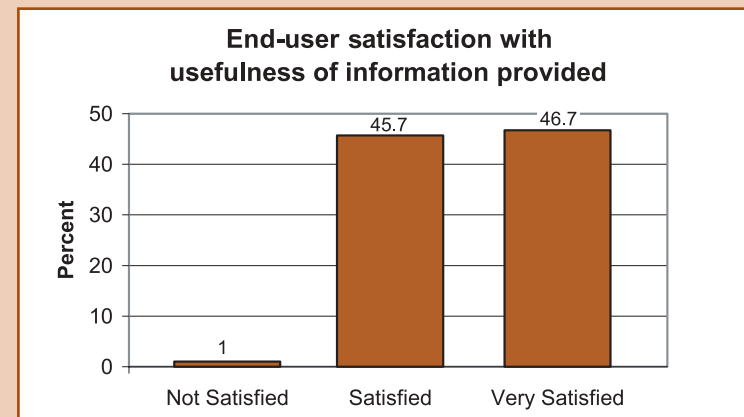
#### Agency or organization at which professional survey respondents are employed



interact with farmers about factors influencing management decisions that potentially impact water quality. Additionally, classroom demonstrations were given utilizing "virtual farmstead tours" created specifically for the Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst program. Over 100 Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst "toolkits", including news releases, presentation materials, and implementation ideas, were distributed to assist water quality professionals in effectively delivering the program to the public.

- ◆ **Partnering.** Quarterly partners' meetings initiated several implementation opportunities and discussion on potential funding sources. The meetings also developed a foundation for planning for the future maintenance of Iowa FAS. Newsletters distributed quarterly to approximately 350 individuals also contributed to keeping partners and stakeholders informed of Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst activities.

- ◆ **Evaluation.** Two different surveys were constructed to gauge the satisfaction of farmers and rural residents (end-users) and water quality professionals utilizing Iowa Farm\*A\*Syst. Survey evaluations were mailed to participants, and a follow postcard was sent within ten days of the original mailing. Response rates to the survey were 29 percent and 78 percent respectively among end-users and professionals. Twenty-four percent of end-users indicated that they plan to make a change on their farmstead as a result of using Iowa FAS. The average cost of planned changes was reported to be \$1386, with anticipated costs ranging from \$5 to \$8000.



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