

## 2004-2006 Task Force

### Membership

#### Arizona

Kevin G. Rogers, Producer

#### California

Cynthia Cory, California Farm  
Bureau Federation

Manuel F. Cunha, Nisei Farmers  
League

Robert G. Flocchini, University of  
California-Davis

Roger Isom, California Cotton  
Ginners & Growers

#### Hawaii

Janet Ashman, Hawaii  
Agricultural Research Center

#### Idaho

Dave Roper, Producer

Patrick A. Takasugi, Idaho  
Department of Agriculture

#### Indiana

Robert N. Jackman, Veterinarian,  
State Senator

Rita Sharma, Producer

#### Maryland

Phillip J. Wakelyn, National  
Cotton Council of America

#### Nevada

Marc Lynn Pitchford, National  
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#### New York

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#### North Carolina

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Joseph Rudek, Environmental  
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#### Oklahoma

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Air Resource Agencies  
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#### Texas

Robert V. Avant, Jr., Texas Food  
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Calvin B. Parnell, Jr., Texas  
A&M University

Bryan Shaw, Texas A&M  
University

#### Utah

Nan W. Bunker, Producer

#### Virginia

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#### Washington

William F. Schillinger,  
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#### Wisconsin

Steven R. Kirkhorn MD,  
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## Background

The Agricultural Air Quality Task Force (AAQTF) was created in accordance with Section 391 of the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform (FAIR) Act of 1996, to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on issues related to agricultural air quality. In 1996, Congress found that various studies alleged that agriculture is a source of PM10 emissions and that many of these studies have often been based on erroneous data. Congress also cited ongoing research by the Department of Agriculture and declared that federal policy in regard to air pollution be based on sound scientific findings that are subject to adequate peer review and take into account economic feasibility.

The Task Force's mandate is to strengthen and coordinate the U.S. Department of Agriculture's air quality research efforts and identify cost effective ways for the agriculture industry to improve air quality and meet federal and local air quality emissions requirements.

Chaired by the Chief of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the AAQTF consists of leaders in farming, industry, health, and science. The task force also includes representatives from USDA's Forest Service, Agricultural Research Service, and Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service.

## Recommendations from the Task Force

At the first meeting of the 2004-2006 Task Force the Chair established four committees that would be charged with reviewing issues that would be presented to the Task Force during the current charter. The four committees are: **Emerging Issues, Policy, Research, and Education and Outreach**. The committees have been actively engaged in reviewing the issues and presenting them to the Task Force along with recommendations that have been sent to the Secretary for consideration. These include:

- USDA and EPA should consult on a joint air quality extramural research program.
- USDA should communicate concerns to EPA regarding the use of a VOC Scaling method for air permitting and compliance.
- EPA should refrain from using consent agreements to regulate agricultural operations.



Properly managed agricultural operations can provide significant environmental benefits.

## 2004-2006 Accomplishment Report

### Recommendations from the Task Force (continued)

- USDA should define emissions sources from agriculture and establish definitions as starting points for discussion with EPA. As a minimum, USDA should define:
  1. Agricultural operations for the purposes of aggregation under the Clean Air Act (CAA)
  2. The treatment of ammonia in context with CAA, CERCLA, and EPCRA
  3. The treatment of by-products or constituents produced through natural biological processes in context with CAA, CERCLA, EPCRA and RCRA
  4. Which media specific statute/regulation shall have priority in a regulatory context
- EPA should use sound engineering practices in determining annual PM10 emissions from agricultural stationary sources for requiring Title V and PSD permits.
- EPA should address sampler bias issues associated with ambient concentration measurements using Federal Reference Method (FRM) samplers.
- EPA should not use the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) as a "concentration not to exceed" at the property line for permitting and enforcement of PM emissions from agricultural sources.
- USDA should establish an agricultural air quality program that has administrative and budgetary control over air quality research and policy.
- Funding levels in USDA for agricultural air quality research should be increased to \$40,000,000 per year to establish a critical mass for the research program.
- USDA should adopt an economically viable environmental trading program for agriculture for consideration in the 2007 Farm Bill.

These recommendations are explained in greater detail in documents posted on the AAQTF website. For additional information on these recommendations and minutes/deliberations from the meetings, including copies of presentations made before the Task Force, please visit the following website.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/AAQTF/documents>



Tours of areas with air quality concerns have been vital to addressing the issues and concerns of the Task Force.

### USDA Accomplishments Resulting from Task Force Recommendations

#### Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS has established an Air Quality and Atmospheric Change team in Portland, OR that is charged with assisting the agency to provide tools to field offices that will mitigate the impacts to air quality from production agriculture. NRCS also provides financial assistance to individuals to address air resource issues/concerns and rewards for stewardship under the Conservation Security Program. The recently released agency strategic plan has identified air quality as one of its venture goals. The agency released the COMET-VR carbon sequestration model and has reviewed conservation practice standards for air quality considerations.

#### Forest Service (FS)

The agency continues to support smoke management practices to mitigate air quality impacts on receptors of concern (for example: human populations, Class I wilderness areas). The agency also monitors the effects of air quality on forest eco-systems. Monitoring information and expertise is routinely shared with the public and other land management agencies.



#### Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)

The agency sponsored the Agricultural Air Quality Workshop held June 5-8, 2006 in Maryland. The National Research Initiative (NRI) Air Quality Program was again funded, and air quality research is being leveraged with the help of funding from state and local sources.



#### Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

As a result of AAQTF input, ARS has nine additional scientists conducting air quality research. These scientists were added through new funds and redirection of existing positions. Three labs are now conducting research to control ozone formation from reactive Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) released from agricultural operations. Increased attention has been given to measurement, control and prediction of PM emissions from agricultural operations.



#### Economic Research Service

The Economic Research Service has been a recent addition to the AAQTF and will provide guidance and insight into the deliberations of the Task Force on economic and policy issues related to agriculture.

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Conservation tillage reduces impacts from water and wind erosion, reduces fuel usage, and can also sequester carbon.

### AAQTF Meetings

Task Force meetings were held around the country in order to witness regional agricultural air quality related concerns in various places nationally and to hear from concerned citizens about the impacts of air quality issues/concerns and regulations. Meetings were held in the following locations:

**Washington, DC January 28-29, 2005**

**Amarillo, TX June 22-23, 2005**

**Wailea, HI November 13-15, 2005**

**Bethesda, MD February 28-March 2, 2006**

**Harrisburg, PA August 30-31, 2006**

Copies of the minutes of the AAQTF meetings are available at:  
<http://www.airquality.nrcs.usda.gov/AAQTF/Documents/index.html>



The intersection of agriculture with urban sprawl causes concerns for farmers and ranchers from those unfamiliar with agriculture.

### Summary

Farmers and ranchers are affected daily by agricultural air quality issues and regulations that likewise face state and federal regulators. These regulations have been written and implemented to protect and improve the environment and public health. Agricultural producers need to have effective and innovative approaches to address air quality issues and mitigate unwanted agricultural emissions to the air.

Agriculture can improve the environment, and address other important air issues, by implementing effective conservation systems to enhance environmental benefits while promoting sustainable agricultural production. For instance, conservation tillage reduces soil erosion, and reduces fuel usage, which leads to fewer exhaust emissions to the air; it also can increase carbon sequestration in soil, which helps to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas. Agricultural crops can be used to develop clean burning alternative fuels like ethanol and bio-diesel, which can help to improve the environment while reducing the country's dependence on foreign sources of energy.

Since the Agricultural Air Quality Task Force's inception in 1996, each group has made a concerted effort to gather information on the diversity and complexity of agricultural air quality issues and concerns facing producers across the country. The Task Force has examined the role of agriculture in climate change, VOC production, and fine and coarse particulate formation in an effort to better understand potential emissions and mitigation strategies. Each task force has made to the Secretary of Agriculture and to the EPA regarding the resolution of these concerns and ensuring the viability of farming as a way of life .

Equally important to each Task Force has been the unwavering emphasis on activities that yield research and sound science that supports the "fair and equitable" regulation of agriculture. Each Task Force has strived to provide recommendations that result in interdisciplinary programs focusing on improving air quality, decreasing agriculture's contribution to ambient particulate matter, more efficient air pollution abatement systems, and more accurate emission factors which yield more reliable emission inventories based on sound science with consideration of economic feasibility. The ultimate goal is minimizing the public impact of air pollution attributed to agriculture while maintaining and sustaining production agriculture.



Windbreaks can be effective at reducing wind erosion and improving air quality around livestock production facilities.

## ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT



Conservation management systems on cropland have been used to reduce agricultural impacts to air quality such as better management of prescribed burning and incorporating direct seeding (no-till) and residue management practices to control soil erosion.



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