

Michigan Commission of Agriculture Approves Revised Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices' (GAAMP) Limiting Scope of Right to Farm Act

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For over a year, the Michigan Ag Commission has considered expanding the scope of the "site selection" GAAMPs in order to bring even small livestock facilities within its scope. The site selection GAAMPs have traditionally applied to very large livestock production facilities, such as those that have at least 5,000 laying hens, 35 mature dairy cattle or 50 feeder cattle, and required those farms to be sited in agricultural areas. Consequently, because there were no siting requirements for small farms, these farms could be in urban areas – often contrary to zoning, which resulted in some conflict.

The Michigan Ag Commission recently voted to revise the site selection GAAMPs to eliminate the minimum animal threshold. Thus, the site selection GAAMPs now apply to all farms, and to comply with those GAAMPs, farms must be located in areas where local zoning allows for agricultural uses. Thus, the GAAMPs and local zoning are now in harmony rather than conflict.

According to Trevor Meachum, Vice-Chair of the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development, "Local control is about being a good neighbor, and these GAAMPs – if farmers follow them – help people remain good neighbors. Different communities have different ideas about what they want, and this accommodates those communities." The changes to the GAAMPs were also endorsed by Michigan Farm Bureau. According to Matt Kapp, Government Relation Specialist with Michigan Farm Bureau, the new GAAMPs do not forbid livestock; they just allow for local decision-making. "While we think that will remove some conflicts, and if this new GAAMP does that, then it creates good neighbors. That's what right-to-farm is all about, and that's good public policy."

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