

Master Farmer Program

States are under pressure from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to meet Total Maximum Daily Load water quality standards, particularly for water bodies with current high pollution levels. Non-point source pollution, such as agricultural run-off, is considered a leading cause of deteriorating water quality. This SSL draft is based on Louisiana Act 145, which enacted a Master Farmer Program to address such concerns.

This SSL draft establishes a program that is designed to help agricultural producers voluntarily reduce the impact their operations have on the environment. The program would be a cooperative effort between the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation Service, the state farm bureau, state university, the state departments of agriculture and natural resources, and soil and water conservation districts. It involves classroom instruction, attendance at model farm field days and development and implementation of farm specific conservation plans. Participating farmers who complete the curriculum are certified as Master Farmers and must submit soil and water conservation plans for their farms to meet certain standards as established by the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation Service, the state department of agriculture and the affected soil and water conservation district. Any farmer who has received certification will be presumed to be in compliance with the state soil and water quality requirements as long as their certification is maintained in accordance with best management practices.

Submitted as:

Louisiana

Act 145 of 2003

Status: Enacted into law in 2003.

Suggested State Legislation

(Title, enacting clause, etc.)

1 Section 1. [*Short Title.*] This Act may be cited as "An Act to Certify Master Farmers."

2

3 Section 2. [*Master Farmer Certification.*]

4 A. The [commissioner of agriculture and forestry] may certify individuals as master
5 farmers in accordance with this section. Each individual must successfully complete a master
6 farmer certification program and have implemented an individual comprehensive soil and water
7 conservation plan that meets the standards and specifications of the United States Department of
8 Agriculture, Natural Resources And Conservation Service, the [state department of agriculture
9 and forestry], and the affected [soil and water conservation district].

10 B. The [commissioner] may adopt rules and regulations setting out the requirements for
11 obtaining a certification. The curriculum shall be established by the [state university agriculture
12 center]. The [state university agriculture center] may consult with other agencies and
13 organizations as needed, including but not limited to the state [department of environmental
14 quality], [department of natural resources], state farm bureau, the United States Department of
15 Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation Service, and the state [soil and water
16 conservation committee]. The curriculum shall include but is not limited to the instruction on
17 environmental issues in agriculture, non-point source pollution, best management and

conservation practices, soil and water quality monitoring demonstrations, and development and implementation of an individual comprehensive soil and water conservation plan.

C. Any individual who has received a master farmer certification shall be presumed to be in compliance with state soil and water quality requirements as long as certification is maintained. The master farmer certification shall continue as long as the individual actively maintains his specific comprehensive conservation plan in accordance with best management practices.

Section 3. [*Severability.*] [Insert severability clause.]

Section 4. [*Repealer.*] [Insert repealer clause.]

Section 5. [*Effective Date.*] [Insert effective date.]