

MICHIGAN RIGHT TO FARM ACT
Act 93 of 1981

AN ACT to define certain farm uses, operations, practices, and products; to provide certain disclosures; to provide for circumstances under which a farm shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance; to provide for certain powers and duties for certain state agencies and departments; and to provide for certain remedies for certain persons.

History: 1981, Act 93, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1981;—Am. 1995, Act 94, Eff. Sept. 30, 1995.

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

286.471 Short title.

Sec. 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the “Michigan right to farm act”.

History: 1981, Act 93, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1981.

286.472 Definitions.

Sec. 2. As used in this act:

(a) “Farm” means the land, plants, animals, buildings, structures, including ponds used for agricultural or aquacultural activities, machinery, equipment, and other appurtenances used in the commercial production of farm products.

(b) “Farm operation” means the operation and management of a farm or a condition or activity that occurs at any time as necessary on a farm in connection with the commercial production, harvesting, and storage of farm products, and includes, but is not limited to:

(i) Marketing produce at roadside stands or farm markets.

(ii) The generation of noise, odors, dust, fumes, and other associated conditions.

(iii) The operation of machinery and equipment necessary for a farm including, but not limited to, irrigation and drainage systems and pumps and on-farm grain dryers, and the movement of vehicles, machinery, equipment, and farm products and associated inputs necessary for farm operations on the roadway as authorized by the Michigan vehicle code, Act No. 300 of the Public Acts of 1949, being sections 257.1 to 257.923 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

(iv) Field preparation and ground and aerial seeding and spraying.

(v) The application of chemical fertilizers or organic materials, conditioners, liming materials, or pesticides.

(vi) Use of alternative pest management techniques.

(vii) The fencing, feeding, watering, sheltering, transportation, treatment, use, handling and care of farm animals.

(viii) The management, storage, transport, utilization, and application of farm by-products, including manure or agricultural wastes.

(ix) The conversion from a farm operation activity to other farm operation activities.

(x) The employment and use of labor.

(c) “Farm product” means those plants and animals useful to human beings produced by agriculture and includes, but is not limited to, forages and sod crops, grains and feed crops, field crops, dairy and dairy products, poultry and poultry products, cervidae, livestock, including breeding and grazing, equine, fish, and other aquacultural products, bees and bee products, berries, herbs, fruits, vegetables, flowers, seeds, grasses, nursery stock, trees and tree products, mushrooms, and other similar products, or any other product which incorporates the use of food, feed, fiber, or fur, as determined by the Michigan commission of agriculture.

(d) “Generally accepted agricultural and management practices” means those practices as defined by the Michigan commission of agriculture. The commission shall give due consideration to available Michigan department of agriculture information and written recommendations from the Michigan state university college of agriculture and natural resources extension and the agricultural experiment station in cooperation with the United States department of agriculture natural resources conservation service and the consolidated farm service agency, the Michigan department of natural resources, and other professional and industry organizations.

(e) “Person” means an individual, corporation, partnership, association, or other legal entity.

History: 1981, Act 93, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1981;—Am. 1987, Act 240, Imd. Eff. Dec. 28, 1987;—Am. 1995, Act 94, Eff. Sept. 30, 1995.

286.473 Farm or farm operation as public or private nuisance; review and revision of

practices; finding; conditions.

Sec. 3. (1) A farm or farm operation shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance if the farm or farm operation alleged to be a nuisance conforms to generally accepted agricultural and management practices according to policy determined by the Michigan commission of agriculture. Generally accepted agricultural and management practices shall be reviewed annually by the Michigan commission of agriculture and revised as considered necessary.

(2) A farm or farm operation shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance if the farm or farm operation existed before a change in the land use or occupancy of land within 1 mile of the boundaries of the farm land, and if before that change in land use or occupancy of land, the farm or farm operation would not have been a nuisance.

(3) A farm or farm operation that is in conformance with subsection (1) shall not be found to be a public or private nuisance as a result of any of the following:

- (a) A change in ownership or size.
- (b) Temporary cessation or interruption of farming.
- (c) Enrollment in governmental programs.
- (d) Adoption of new technology.
- (e) A change in type of farm product being produced.

History: 1981, Act 93, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1981;—Am. 1987, Act 240, Imd. Eff. Dec. 28, 1987;—Am. 1995, Act 94, Eff. Sept. 30, 1995.

286.473a Repealed. 1999, Act 261, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000.

Compiler's note: The repealed section pertained to complaints generally.

286.473b Recovery of costs and expenses.

Sec. 3b. In any nuisance action brought in which a farm or farm operation is alleged to be a nuisance, if the defendant farm or farm operation prevails, the farm or farm operation may recover from the plaintiff the actual amount of costs and expenses determined by the court to have been reasonably incurred by the farm or farm operation in connection with the defense of the action, together with reasonable and actual attorney fees.

History: Add. 1995, Act 94, Eff. Sept. 30, 1995.

286.473c Property subject to disclosure; contents of statement.

Sec. 3c. (1) Certain real property is subject to those disclosures described in section 7 of the seller disclosure act, Act No. 92 of the Public Acts of 1993, being section 565.957 of the Michigan Compiled Laws. A seller of real property located within 1 mile of the property boundary of a farm or farm operation may voluntarily make available to the buyer the following statement: "This notice is to inform prospective residents that the real property they are about to acquire lies within 1 mile of the property boundary of a farm or farm operation. Generally accepted agricultural and management practices may be utilized by the farm or farm operation and may generate usual and ordinary noise, dust, odors, and other associated conditions, and these practices are protected by the Michigan right to farm act."

(2) Certain subdivided land is subject to those disclosures described in section 8 of the land sales act, Act No. 286 of the Public Acts of 1972, being section 565.808 of the Michigan Compiled Laws.

History: Add. 1995, Act 94, Eff. Sept. 30, 1995.

286.474 Investigation of complaints involving farm or farm operation; memorandum of understanding; generally accepted agricultural and management practices; unverified complaints; applicability of other statutes; preemption of local ordinance, regulation, or resolution; ordinance proposed by local unit of government; generally accepted agricultural and management practices for site selection and odor controls at new or expanding animal livestock facilities; advisory committee; manure management plan; duties of department; definitions.

Sec. 4. (1) Subject to subsection (2), the director shall investigate all complaints involving a farm or farm operation, including, but not limited to, complaints involving the use of manure and other nutrients, agricultural waste products, dust, noise, odor, fumes, air pollution, surface water or groundwater pollution, food and agricultural processing by-products, care of farm animals and pest infestations. Within 7 business days of receipt of the complaint, the director shall conduct an on-site inspection of the farm or farm operation. The director shall notify, in writing, the city, village, or township and the county in which the farm or farm operation is located of the complaint.

(2) The commission and the director shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the director of

the department of environmental quality. The investigation and resolution of environmental complaints concerning farms or farm operations shall be conducted in accordance with the memorandum of understanding. However, the director shall notify the department of environmental quality of any potential violation of the natural resources and environmental protection act, 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.101 to 324.90106, or a rule promulgated under that act. Activities at a farm or farm operation are subject to applicable provisions of the natural resources and environmental protection act, 1994 PA 451, MCL 324.101 to 324.90106, and the rules promulgated under that act. The commission and the director shall develop procedures for the investigation and resolution for other farm-related complaints.

(3) If the director finds upon investigation under subsection (1) that the person responsible for a farm or farm operation is using generally accepted agricultural and management practices, the director shall notify, in writing, that person, the complainant, and the city, village, or township and the county in which the farm or farm operation is located of this finding. If the director identifies that the source or potential sources of the problem were caused by the use of other than generally accepted agricultural and management practices, the director shall advise the person responsible for the farm or farm operation that necessary changes should be made to resolve or abate the problem and to conform with generally accepted agricultural and management practices and that if those changes cannot be implemented within 30 days, the person responsible for the farm or farm operation shall submit to the director an implementation plan including a schedule for completion of the necessary changes. When the director conducts a follow-up on-site inspection to verify whether those changes have been implemented, the director shall notify, in writing, the city, village, or township and the county in which the farm or farm operation is located of the time and date of the follow-up on-site inspection and shall allow a representative of the city, village, or township and the county to be present during the follow-up on-site inspection. If the changes have been implemented, the director shall notify, in writing, the person responsible for the farm or farm operation, the complainant, and the city, village, or township and the county in which the farm or farm operation is located of this determination. If the changes have not been implemented, the director shall notify, in writing, the complainant and the city, village, or township and the county in which the farm or farm operation is located that the changes have not been implemented and whether a plan for implementation has been submitted. Upon request, the director shall provide a copy of the implementation plan to the city, village, or township and the county in which the farm or farm operation is located.

(4) A complainant who brings more than 3 unverified complaints against the same farm or farm operation within 3 years may be ordered, by the director, to pay to the department the full costs of investigation of any fourth or subsequent unverified complaint against the same farm or farm operation. As used in this subsection, "unverified complaint" means a complaint in response to which the director determines that the farm or farm operation is using generally accepted agricultural and management practices.

(5) Except as provided in subsection (6), this act does not affect the application of state statutes and federal statutes.

(6) Beginning June 1, 2000, except as otherwise provided in this section, it is the express legislative intent that this act preempt any local ordinance, regulation, or resolution that purports to extend or revise in any manner the provisions of this act or generally accepted agricultural and management practices developed under this act. Except as otherwise provided in this section, a local unit of government shall not enact, maintain, or enforce an ordinance, regulation, or resolution that conflicts in any manner with this act or generally accepted agricultural and management practices developed under this act.

(7) A local unit of government may submit to the director a proposed ordinance prescribing standards different from those contained in generally accepted agricultural and management practices if adverse effects on the environment or public health will exist within the local unit of government. A proposed ordinance under this subsection shall not conflict with existing state laws or federal laws. At least 45 days prior to enactment of the proposed ordinance, the local unit of government shall submit a copy of the proposed ordinance to the director. Upon receipt of the proposed ordinance, the director shall hold a public meeting in that local unit of government to review the proposed ordinance. In conducting its review, the director shall consult with the departments of environmental quality and community health and shall consider any recommendations of the county health department of the county where the adverse effects on the environment or public health will allegedly exist. Within 30 days after the public meeting, the director shall make a recommendation to the commission on whether the ordinance should be approved. An ordinance enacted under this subsection shall not be enforced by a local unit of government until approved by the commission of agriculture.

(8) By May 1, 2000, the commission shall issue proposed generally accepted agricultural and management practices for site selection and odor controls at new and expanding animal livestock facilities. The commission shall adopt such generally accepted agricultural and management practices by June 1, 2000. In

developing these generally accepted agricultural and management practices, the commission shall do both of the following:

(a) Establish an advisory committee to provide recommendations to the commission. The advisory committee shall include the entities listed in section 2(d), 2 individuals representing townships, 1 individual representing counties, and 2 individuals representing agricultural industry organizations.

(b) For the generally accepted agricultural and management practices for site selection, consider groundwater protection, soil permeability, and other factors determined necessary or appropriate by the commission.

(9) If generally accepted agricultural and management practices require the person responsible for the operation of a farm or farm operation to prepare a manure management plan, the person responsible for the operation of the farm or farm operation shall provide a copy of that manure management plan to the city, village, or township or the county in which the farm or farm operation is located, upon request. A manure management plan provided under this subsection is exempt from disclosure under the freedom of information act, 1976 PA 442, MCL 15.231 to 15.246.

(10) The department shall do all of the following:

(a) Annually submit to the standing committees of the senate and house of representatives with jurisdiction over issues pertaining to agriculture and local government a report on the implementation of this act.

(b) Make available on the department's website current generally accepted agricultural and management practices.

(c) Establish a toll-free telephone number for receipt of information on noncompliance with generally accepted agricultural and management practices.

(11) As used in this section:

(a) "Adverse effects on the environment or public health" means any unreasonable risk to human beings or the environment, based on scientific evidence and taking into account the economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits and specific populations whose health may be adversely affected.

(b) "Commission" means the commission of agriculture.

(c) "Department" means the department of agriculture.

(d) "Director" means the director of the department or his or her designee.

History: 1981, Act 93, Imd. Eff. July 11, 1981;—Am. 1995, Act 94, Eff. Sept. 30, 1995;—Am. 1999, Act 261, Eff. Mar. 10, 2000.