

# 4/2/97 Study sees urban sprawl eating farmland

DES MOINES (AP) — Urban sprawl has consumed up to 15 percent of the available farmland in some counties in Iowa in just an 18-year span, a study released Friday said.

The study called for better planning of development and more coordination between local governments.

Tom Sanchez, a professor of Community and Regional Planning at Iowa State University, wrote the study. "A shared sense of responsibility by local jurisdictions" is needed, he said.

One legislator suggested a state land use commission to set guidelines for development.

The study focused on a nine-county region in central Iowa around Des Moines.

But Sanchez said the same patterns would exist around other growing urban areas of the state.

"These are probably occurring in

these other metropolitan areas," Sanchez said at a news conference.

The study found that Polk County has lost 15.7 percent of its farmland, while Marshall County has lost 11.9 percent. Dallas County, a hotbed of suburban development, has lost 11.8 percent of its farmland, and Boone County has lost 6.4 percent.

The study documented the loss of farmland from 1974 to 1992.

The gradual expansion of cities has gradually dispersed the population, leading more and more land to be used to support the population. Over a 40-year stretch, the number of people per acre in the Des Moines area had dropped from 5.7 to 3.6 people.

Rep. Ed Fallon, D-Des Moines, said he was drafting legislation aimed at controlling urban sprawl. Details of that bill are still being polished, but it would set up a state land use commis-

## ► Farmland lost

Findings of a survey of the amount of farmland lost in nine Iowa counties from 1974 to 1992:

|          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| Boone    | 6.4 percent  |
| Story    | 2.7 percent  |
| Marshall | 11.9 percent |
| Dallas   | 11.8 percent |
| Polk     | 15.7 percent |
| Jasper   | 1.8 percent  |
| Madison  | 8.8 percent  |
| Warren   | 8.7 percent  |
| Marion   | 8.1 percent  |

sion to set guidelines under which local governments could draw land-use plans.

"We can't afford to lose farmland at the rate we're losing it," Fallon said. "There has to be some consensus."