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Conservation Practices on Cultivated Cropland/A Comparison of CEAP 1 and CEAP II Survey Data/Modeling: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Report

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The United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”) issued a March report titled:

Conservation Practices on Cultivated Cropland - A Comparison of CEAP I and CEAP II Survey Data and Modeling (“Report”)

The *Report* was developed by USDA’s Conservation Effects Assessment Project.

NRCS describes the *Report* as documenting the progress that has been made through voluntary conservation over a 10-year period.

The *Report* describes the use of techniques such as:

- No-till
- Crop rotations
- More efficient irrigation methods
- Advanced technologies

Key findings from the *Report* include:

- Farmers increasingly adopted advanced technology, including enhanced-efficiency fertilizers and variable rate fertilization to improve efficiency, assist agricultural economies and benefit the environment.
- More efficient conservation tillage systems, particularly no-till, became the dominant form of tillage, improving soil health and reducing fuel use.
- Use of structural practices increased, largely in combination with conservation tillage as farmers increasingly integrated conservation treatments to gain efficiencies. Structural practices include terraces, filter and buffer strips, grassed waterways and field borders.
- Irrigation expanded in more humid areas, and as irrigators shifted to more efficient systems and improved water management strategies, per-acre water application rates decreased by 19% and withdrawals by 7 million-acre-feet.

- Nearly 70% of cultivated cropland had conservation crop rotations, and 28% had high-biomass conservation crop rotations.

Additional figures from the *Report* include estimates such as:

- Average annual water (sheet and rill) and wind erosion dropped by 70 million and 94 million tons, respectively, and edge-of-field sediment loss declined by 74 million tons.
- Nearly 26 million additional acres of cultivated cropland were gaining soil carbon, and carbon gains on all cultivated cropland increased by over 8.8 million tons per year.
- Nitrogen and phosphorus losses through surface runoff declined by 3% and 6%, respectively.
- Average annual fuel use dropped by 110 million gallons of diesel fuel equivalents, avoiding associated greenhouse gas emissions of nearly 1.2 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalents.

A link to the *Report* can be found [here](#).