

**IMPACTS OF COMMODITY PROGRAMS ON CROPPING SYSTEMS:
IS MARGINAL OR RADICAL CHANGE NEEDED?**

by

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INTRODUCTION

Federal farm bills seldom involve radical change. Though farm income support and commodity supply control policies have been constantly evolving, the general structure and underlying philosophies of present day policies have their roots in New Deal legislation of the 1930s. A variety of forces are now causing these policies to be challenged, however.

Pressures to make agriculture, as well as other sectors of our economy, more market-oriented constitute one of those forces. Aspects of commodity programs which restrict farmers' ability to respond to market signals are increasingly difficult to defend. Recent international trade agreements, in particular, underscore the need for the agricultural sector to respond to constantly changing supply and demand forces.

Budget constraints constitute a second force for change. If agriculture is compelled to undergo severe reductions in Federal appropriations, radical change in the structure of commodity programs may be imperative.

Finally, pressures to make agricultural practices more sustainable environmentally constitute a third force for change. The last two farm bills (in 1985 and 1990) involved marginal--though significant--changes in commodity policies in response to this force. Those changes, for example, gave farmers more flexibility to use crop rotations that include "conserving" crops without giving up commodity support payments.

It remains to be seen whether the 1995 farm bill will bring *marginal* or *radical* changes in commodity policies. Radical changes in public policies seldom occur in democracies other than in times of crisis. However, these three forces, combined, conceivably could result in radical change. If the change is not radical in the farm bill

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currently being debated, it may be in the next one. Two proposals recently put forth by the Clinton Administration could constitute bases for radical change. They are the proposed Total Acreage Base and the Conservation Farm Option (USDA, 1995b), both of which will be discussed later.

I will give primary attention in this paper to implications of the third force discussed above--dealing with agricultural sustainability--for marginal or radical change in farm commodity programs. First, I will examine the influence of past and present commodity programs on farmers' choices of cropping systems. Next, I will discuss some of the *marginal* changes in recent farm bills, particularly those providing more flexibility in planting decisions. Then, somewhat more *radical* change possibilities will be presented. Finally, I will conclude with my observations on whether *marginal* or *radical* changes in commodity programs are needed at this time.

INFLUENCE OF PAST AND PRESENT COMMODITY PROGRAMS

It is generally felt that diverse crop rotations, particularly ones that include legumes, are more conducive to the objectives of sustainable agriculture than are monocrop systems or rotations that include only row crops or only small grains. Chemical input use is generally lower in diverse rotations and soil structure and water holding capacity tend to be better. Resource conservation is enhanced and environmental externalities such as groundwater contamination are reduced by shifts from relatively narrow to more diverse rotations.

An overview of the present status of crop rotations in the U.S. is contained in Table 1, with data for the 1993 crop year. Seventy-eight percent of the Highly Erodible Land (HEL) corn acreage is part of either a continuous corn system (26 percent) or a continuous row crop system (52 percent). For soybeans and cotton, the percent of HEL acreage in either the continuous same crop or continuous row crops is 84 and 94, respectively. Data for wheat in Table 1 is somewhat more difficult to interpret. Much of the HEL wheat acreage is part of continuous wheat, continuous small grain, or wheat-fallow systems. It is not clear how much of the wheat-fallow system acreage includes green manures during the fallow portion of the rotation.

High proportions of the corn, soybean, and cotton acreage on non-HEL land also are part of continuous same crop or continuous row crop rotations (Table 1). Smaller proportions of the winter and spring wheat non-HEL acreage are part of wheat-fallow systems than is the case on HEL acreage. A higher proportion of spring wheat on non-HEL acreage (44 percent) is part of row crop-small grain rotations, compared to spring wheat on HEL acreage (7 percent).

Table 1. Erodibility distribution of crop acreage by crop rotations, 1993.

Item	Corn	Soybeans	Cotton	Winter wheat	Spring wheat
	Percent of planted acres				
Erodibility of land:					
Highly erodible	20	18	23	34	21
Not highly erodible	75	79	68	62	77
Not designated	5	3	9	4	2
	Percent of HEL planted acres				
Three-year crop sequence on HEL:					
Continuous same crop	26	4	63	24	13
Continuous row crops	52	80	31	n/a	n/a
Continuous small grains	n/a	n/a	n/a	id	6
Row crops & small grains	3	7	2	13	7
Idle or fallow in rotation	10	8	2	62	68
Hay or other crops in rotation	9	1	2	id	nr
	Percent of non-HEL planted acres				
Three-year crop sequence on non-HEL:					
Continuous same crop	24	6	60	46	14
Continuous row crops	60	76	28	n/a	n/a
Continuous small grains	n/a	n/a	n/a	id	14
Row crop and small grains	5	12	2	14	44
Idle or fallow in rotation	7	5	8	40	26
Hay or other crops in rotation	3	1	2	id	2

n/a = not applicable. id = insufficient data. nr = none reported.

Source: USDA (1994), p. 147.

How have past and present commodity programs contributed to the present cropping system pattern? This question can be addressed by considering four features of the programs: (1) payments tied to particular crops; (2) payments tied to yield levels; (3) need to protect acreage bases; and (4) acreage set-aside requirements.

Payments tied to particular crops: Target prices and associated deficiency payments tied to particular crops, over time, likely have induced farmers to have narrower crop rotations than otherwise would be the case. For example, deficiency payments tied to corn no doubt have increased the acreage of corn relative to what it might otherwise have been in "transitional" areas on the edge of the Great Plains. Program crops like corn and their associated narrow rotations (e.g., corn-soybeans) also tend to be heavier users of chemical inputs than the rotation systems which they have replaced. Also, the impact of target prices on use of marginal lands cannot be ignored, as such lands may revert to non-crop use when target prices for particular crops decline (Helmert and Hoag, 1994). This could be the case with some wheat acreage in the Great Plains.

Payments tied to yield levels: Deficiency payments are tied to acreage bases and to base yields. Prior to the 1985 farm bill, the base yields were tied to moving averages of each farmer's own yields. Thus, up to that time at least, the target prices and associated deficiency payments also provided incentive to farm more intensively on acres planted to program crops than would otherwise be done. Again, this meant greater use of chemical inputs than would have occurred without this program feature.

Need to protect acreage bases: The commodity program in existence prior to the 1990 farm bill provided little planting flexibility to farmers who wished to benefit from deficiency payments. Acreage bases for most program crops were tied to 5-year averages of acreage planted (or "considered planted") to each individual crop. The "acreage base formulas constrained planting flexibility by imposing significant costs if an alternative crop were planted" (Westcott, 1991, p. 1105.). For example, Young and Painter (1990) demonstrated how program acreage base could erode, over time, if farmers were to adopt green manure rotations.

Acreage set-aside requirements: The potential effects of commodity program acreage set-aside requirements on the attractiveness of relatively more sustainable systems involve complex interactions. Though set-aside acres can, in principle, sometimes be conducive to the use of rotations consisting in part of green manure crops (Dobbs, et al., 1988), constant changes in yearly set-aside requirements "reduce the possibility of using set-aside acreage directly in a long-term rotation" (Helmert and Hoag, 1994, p. 127). Other interactions entail the output and input substitution effects of reduced acreage in program crops due to set-aside requirements (Helmert and Hoag, 1994). Reduced acreage and output of program crops have the effect of decreasing associated chemical fertilizer and pesticide input use, relative to what it would be without the set-aside

requirements. On the other hand, reduced acreage makes land more expensive as a production input, relative to chemical inputs. Thus, substitution of chemicals for land can at least partially offset the chemical input reduction associated with fewer program crop acres. We can see from the complexity of these various interactions that acreage set-aside requirements are unlikely to be consistently supportive of sustainable agriculture without having some degree of stability and some direct ties to crop rotation requirements.

"MARGINAL" CHANGES IN RECENT FARM BILLS

Several changes in recent farm bills introduced somewhat more flexibility in the cropping system choices of farmers. Since the changes left the basic, overall commodity program structure in place, I would consider the changes to be "marginal", rather than "radical". Nevertheless, they do have potential implications for agricultural sustainability. The changes to be discussed include: (1) freezing of program yields; (2) triple-base flexibility provisions; (3) the Integrated Farm Management Program Option; (4) 0/85/92 and 50/85/92 programs; and (5) Zero Certification. The first change does not deal with flexibility, but it is interrelated with some of the other changes and has implications for sustainability.

Before discussing these individual changes, a brief overview of the U.S. crop and idled acreage pattern for recent years is in order. Data for 1991 through 1994 are contained in Table 2. We can see that land planted in "principal crops" totals roughly 325 million acres in most years. Corn and soybeans constitute approximately 24 and 18 percent of those acres, respectively. Wheat makes up around 22 percent. Acres idled under Federal farm programs declined from 64.5 million acres in 1991 to 49.2 million in 1994. A large portion (35-36 million acres) of that idled land was in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), and a significant portion (11-15 million acres) was in the 0/85/92 and 50/85/92 programs. Acreage Reduction Program (ARP)--annual "set-aside"--acres declined from roughly 17 million in 1991 to less than 2 million in 1994. Wheat had no set-aside requirements in 1993 and 1994, nor did corn in 1994. Cotton was the only program crop with set-aside requirements in 1994.

Freezing of program yields: Since the 1985 farm bill, program yields have been "frozen", meaning they are no longer moving up with the long-term trend of actual yields. As a result, corn program yields as a percent of actual yields (nationwide) declined from approximately 95 percent in 1986 to 88 percent in 1992; for wheat, the decline over that period was from roughly 97 percent to 92 percent (Westcott, 1993). One result of this freezing of program yields is that there is no longer incentive to apply more yield increasing chemical inputs in order to get higher deficiency payments--unless farmers try to improve their yield histories in anticipation of the possibility of program yields becoming "unfrozen" at some point.

Table 2. U.S. crop acreage planted and idled in programs.

Item	1991	1992	1993	1994
	Million acres			
Principal crops	325.4	326.5	319.6	324.3
Feed grains	104.6	108.2	98.8	102.7
Corn	77.0	79.3	73.2	79.2
Wheat	69.9	72.2	72.2	70.4
Soybeans	59.2	59.2	60.1	61.9
Cotton	14.1	13.2	13.4	13.7
Fruit and vegetables	6.8	6.9	6.9	7.2
Idled in programs	64.5	54.9	59.9	49.2
ARP	17.1	8.6	8.4	1.5
0/85/92 & 50/85/92 ¹	13.0	10.9	15.1	11.3
CRP	34.4	35.4	36.4	36.4

¹Includes land idled under these programs but planted to minor oilseeds or other crops as permitted.

Source: USDA (1995a), p. 27.

Other things equal, as program yields as a percent of actual yields continue to decline, farmer incentives to continue program participation gradually weaken. However, other things are not always equal. Set-aside requirements also affect the total deficiency payment for a farm and, therefore, the decision about whether to participate in commodity programs (Westcott, 1993). Declining set-aside requirements in recent years could have at least partially offset the effect of frozen program yields on farmer incentives to participate, but the triple-base provision of the 1990 farm bill decreased the proportion of planted acres that receives a deficiency payment.

Triple-base flexibility provisions: As a result of budget compromises, the 1990 farm bill produced the "triple-base" provision. This provision made 15 percent of base, over and above set-aside acres, ineligible for deficiency payments. However, on these "normal flex" acres, farmers are allowed to grow and harvest most other crops except for many of the fruits and vegetables. Also, program crops grown on these flex acres are eligible for price support loans. The triple-base provision also included "optional flex" acres totaling 10 percent of base, under which farmers can voluntarily forgo deficiency payments in return for crop planting flexibility and base protection.

An overview of the impacts of triple-base flexibility provisions on cropping systems is presented in Table 3. Since 1991, the first year of the program, the acres actually flexed as a percent of those that could have been flexed has ranged from 19 (in 1992) to 24 (in 1994). More than half of the acres flexed each year (from 51 to 57 percent) have been planted to soybeans. Roughly a third (from 31 to 38 percent) have been flexed to other "program" crops. Net changes in acreage due to flexing have been downward for all program crops except cotton. One study concluded that flex acre shifts to soybeans and cotton in 1991 "probably presented a negative net effect on the environment: soil erosion on cropland probably increased, as did pesticide use, while fertilizer use may have declined only slightly." (Cook, et al., 1992, p. 5).

Roughly 20 percent of normal flex acres were idled annually, over the period 1991-1994. More than half of these idled flex acres came from wheat base in the Great Plains. (Daberkow, et al., 1995, forthcoming).

Net declines in overall "program" crop acreages ranged from 13 percent (in 1992) to 18 percent (in 1994) of total possible flex acres (derived from data in Table 3). In reviewing farmers' responses to triple-base flex provisions thus far, three USDA economists recently concluded that at current relative crop prices, further increases in planting flexibility would "most likely lead to only marginal changes in crop mixes" (Daberkow, et al., 1995, forthcoming, p. 2 of prepublication copy).

Integrated Farm Management Program Option: One result, though in compromised form, of concerted efforts by sustainable agriculture proponents to reduce financial "penalties" for diversified crop rotations and other conservation practices was

Table 3. Impact of Triple-base flexibility provisions

Item	1991	1992	1993	1994
	Thousand acres			
Total possible flex acres ¹	33,183	41,735	43,974	43,658
Total acres actual flexed	7,283	7,854	8,978	10,414
(Percent of possible flex acres)	(22)	(19)	(20)	(24)
Flexed to soybeans	3,996	4,028	4,722	5,914
(Percent of total acres flexed)	(55)	(51)	(53)	(57)
Flexed to other non-program crops	984	875	1,122	1,306
(Percent of total acres flexed)	(13)	(11)	(12)	(12)
Flexed to other program crops	2,303	2,951	3,134	3,194
(Percent of total acres flexed)	(32)	(38)	(35)	(31)
Net changes in crop acreages ²				
Corn	-3,104	-2,693	-3,002	-4,262
Sorghum	- 371	- 216	- 250	- 322
Barley	- 320	- 561	- 518	- 579
Oats	- 231	- 258	- 271	- 261
Wheat	-1,319	-1,570	-2,217	-2,356
Cotton	151	121	143	189
Rice	- 261	- 275	- 307	- 276
Total, program crops ³	-5,454	-5,452	-6,423	-7,867

¹Includes "normal" flex acres and "optional" flex acres.

²After netting out acres flexed from one program crop to another.

³Distribution may not add to totals due to rounding.

Sources: USDA (1994), p. 11; Daugherty (unpublished, 1995).

the 1990 farm bill's pilot Integrated Farm Management Program Option (IFMPO). This voluntary commodity program was designed to give farmers additional flexibility in developing more diverse, resource-conserving crop rotations. The IFMPO provides farm program payments for planting resource-conserving crops on acres eligible for deficiency payments and allows some harvesting on set-aside acres. To participate in this program option, a farmer must plant at least 20 percent of his or her crop acreage base to resource-conserving crops. The 1990 farm bill requires (to the extent practicable) that 3 to 5 million acres of cropland per year be enrolled in the IFMPO. However, a total of only 321,474 acres had been enrolled, nationwide, through 1994 (Langley, 1995).

Dobbs (1993) reviewed several case analyses done in the early 1990s to assess the potential economic attractiveness to farmers of the IFMPO. Those analyses tended to show that the IFMPO could be helpful to farmers considering conversions to more sustainable farming systems if the economic attractiveness of those systems is already reasonably good or if there are other strong motivations for the switch (such as accomplishing long-term conservation or significant reduction in chemical use). However, the economic incentives in this program, by themselves, are somewhat weak. In addition to its weak economic incentives, the IFMPO is complex and difficult even for experts to understand and interpret.

0/85/92 and 50/85/92 programs: The 1985 farm bill allowed farmers to plant 50 percent of their eligible program base and receive up to 92 percent of the deficiency payment on that base (FAPRI, 1995). With various revisions since then, rules now allow wheat and feed grain producers to devote all or a portion of their permitted acreage to conserving uses, minor oilseeds (not including soybeans), and certain industrial or other crops--and receive 85 percent of the deficiency payment. The rules are similar for upland cotton and rice, except that at least 50 percent of the crop's maximum payment acreage must be planted to the program crop. Certain exceptions allow up to 92 percent of the deficiency payment to be received in the cotton and rice program, as well as in the wheat and feed grain program. (Langley, 1995)

Producers' use of the 0/85/92 and 50/85/92 programs in 1994 are shown in Table 4. Nearly 13 million acres were enrolled, of which 88 percent were idled and 12 percent planted to other crops. Most of the acreage planted to other crops consisted of minor oilseeds. Enrollment in the 0/85/92 program was especially heavy in the Great Plains States, and Texas was the largest source of enrollment in the 50/85/92 program for both upland cotton and rice (Langley, 1995). Forty percent (5.2 million acres) of the enrolled acreage in these programs was from wheat base (see Table 4). Barley, corn, and sorghum were next in importance, in that order.

Zero Certification: Farmers may also decide not to plant a program crop, but still retain the base by filing a zero acreage report. Under this "Zero Certification" provision, farmers earn no deficiency payments during the year the crop is not planted.

Table 4. Producers' use of 0/85/92 and 50/85/92 provisions in 1994.

Item	Idled	Planted to minor oilseeds	Planted to sesame & crambe	Total 0/85/92 & 50/85/92 ¹
		Thousand acres		
Corn	2,042	304	4	2,350
Sorghum	1,571	37	2	1,611
Barley	2,147	512	5	2,664
Oats	466	102	2	571
Wheat	4,547	627	6	5,180
Upland cotton	222	N/A	4	226
Rice	<u>256</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>256</u>
Total ¹	11,253	1,584	22	12,858

¹Distributions may not add to totals due to rounding.

Source: Langley (1995), p. 12.

Within certain limits, farmers can plant another nonparticipating program or non-program crop on the zero certified acres. (Langley, 1995). The fact that deficiency payments are not available under this program makes it less attractive than the 0/85/92 and 50/85/92 alternatives (Helmert and Hoag).

Assessment: Hoag, et al. (1994, p. 5.) state that "changes in commodity programs in the last two farm bills have not produced substantial increases in the use of SA [sustainable agriculture] systems." They contend that there are two reasons for this. One is that Congress failed to develop a clear and consistent policy for sustainable agriculture. The second is that the flexibility provisions did not have clear goals in terms of sustainable agriculture; consequently, the flexibility benefits were insufficient to cause substantial change in farming practices and systems. (Hoag, et al., 1994, pp. 5-6) Langley (1995, p. 20) draws a similar conclusion about the flexibility provisions of current commodity programs, stating "The fact that producers do not take full advantage of existing flexibility provisions indicates that the economic constraints tend to be more restrictive than the program constraints."

"RADICAL" CHANGE POSSIBILITIES

Changes that would have been more "radical" than those discussed above were part of the dialogue leading up to the 1990 farm bill, and some changes that could be considered radical recently have been put forth by the Clinton Administration for the 1995 farm bill. Some of the major types of possible radical change can be considered either *de facto* or *de jure decoupling*.

De facto decoupling: The Bush Administration's central proposal for the 1990 farm bill was the Normal Crop Acreage (NCA) program--a form of *de facto* decoupling of income supports from crop planting decisions which would have gone beyond the triple-base and IFMPO types of flexibility that ultimately appeared in the 1990 farm bill. In such a program, a NCA for a farm would be established by summing the individual crop acreage bases and historical oilseed plantings for the farm. Any combination of program crops and oilseeds could be planted on the NCA. Planting and harvesting of non-program and non-oilseed crops on the NCA would result in a reduction in deficiency payments. Government deficiency payments under this program would have been based upon historical plantings and base yields; essentially, the payments would have been "decoupled", except for deductions for any harvested acres of non-program or non-oilseed crops on the NCA.

Dobbs and Becker (1992), Painter and Young (1993), Huang and Uri (1992), and Westcott (1991) all analyzed variations of NCA programs a few years ago. In essence, NCA programs place primary emphasis on market prices in farmers' planting decisions. Where current market prices favor existing crop systems--such as corn-soybean systems

in the Corn Belt--NCA programs may foster very little change to more diverse rotation systems. Where alternative cropping systems are of roughly equal profitability to conventional systems, NCA programs may trigger changes. Dobbs and Becker (1992) noted greater potential for changes when the NCA program also allows for planting and harvesting of forage legumes and non-program crops without reducing deficiency payments.

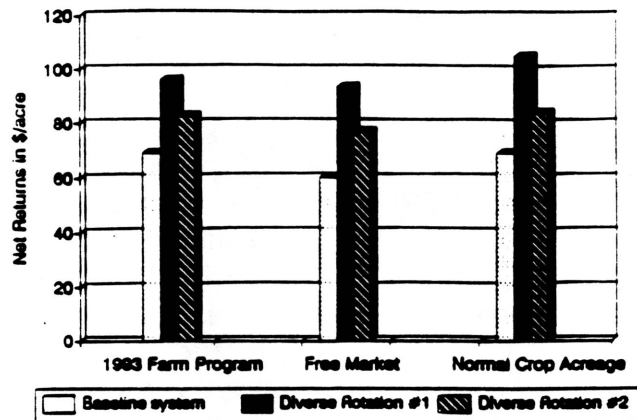
My colleagues² at SDSU and I also recently have examined a possible NCA program in the context of efforts to encourage cropping practices and rotations in eastern South Dakota that may reduce risks of groundwater contamination from agricultural chemicals. Results for three case farms are shown in Figure 1. More diverse crop rotation systems are compared to current ("baseline") systems on each of the farms under three different policy scenarios: (1) the Federal farm program with target prices, set-aside provisions, etc. as they were in 1993; (2) a "free market" scenario with no deficiency payments or set-aside requirements; and (3) a NCA program in which deficiency payments are decoupled, and farmers are free to plant any crops--including forage legumes. With Case Farms #2 and #3, both dryland farms, the more diverse rotations appear to be more profitable than the baseline rotations under all three policy scenarios (Figure 1). Both corn and soybeans constitute part of the baseline systems of these two case farms. Case Farm #4, on the other hand, is an irrigated farm with continuous corn as its baseline system. In the case of this farm, changing to either a free market or a NCA policy appears to make a corn-soybean rotation more attractive to the farmer than the continuous corn system. The alternative policies also raise the relative profitability of a diverse rotation (#3) that includes alfalfa, but not to the profitability levels of either continuous corn or the corn-soybean system.

Recently released 1995 farm bill "guidance" to Congress from the Clinton Administration (USDA, 1995b) includes a suggestion to include all crop bases in a Total Acreage Base (TAB). "Deficiency payments would be determined in a manner similar to that of current programs by multiplying the program payment yield by a producer's historical base acreage adjusted for any acreage reduction requirement and the percentage of nonpayment acres ..." (USDA, 1995b, p. 4). Flexibility to plant alternative crops designated by the Secretary of Agriculture on the TAB would be gradually phased in, to possibly 100 percent over 5 years. Also, farmers could be given the option of using some acreage for environmental purposes without losing payments or base.

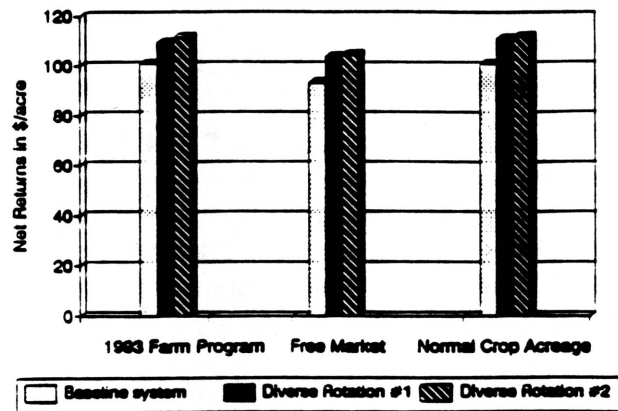
The broad outlines of the Clinton Administration TAB proposal appear very similar to some versions of NCA proposals that have been discussed since debate began on the 1990 farm bill. If significantly greater flexibility is to be introduced in the 1995 farm bill, something like the TAB approach is a logical next step. By itself, however, it

²Lon Henning and Burton Pflueger in the Economics Department, and John Bischoff in the Water Resources Institute.

Policy Analyses: Case Farm #2



Policy Analyses: Case Farm #3



Policy Analyses: Case Farm #4

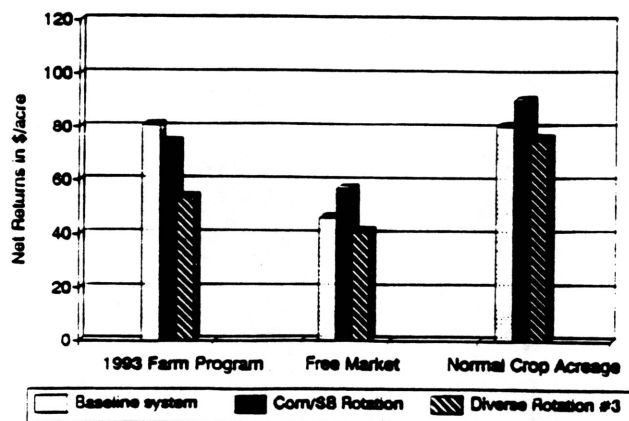


Figure 1. Profitability estimates for selected policy options, Big Sioux Aquifer (South Dakota) case farms.

should not be expected to cause major acreage shifts to more sustainable types of crop rotation systems.

De jure decoupling: There has been an expanding dialogue over the past 2 to 3 years about the possibilities for, and implications of, *de jure* decoupling of income supports from planting decisions and adding some type of "stewardship" or "green" payments to accomplish environmental sustainability objectives. The general thrust of this dialogue has been to suggest that income supports be completely divorced from current planting decisions, so that crop selection could more readily respond to market forces, and that substantial portions of the funds previously allocated to income supports be shifted to stewardship payments. Possible forms and implications of stewardship programs have been described and discussed in a series of recent policy papers by the Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture [Dobbs, 1993; Lynch and Smith, 1994; and Lynch (ed.), 1994].

The Clinton Administration's guidance to Congress (USDA, 1995b) includes a proposed program that appears to go beyond the 1990 farm bill's IFMPO and that is in the nature of a "stewardship" or "green" payments program. It is called a Conservation Farm Option (CFO), and it "would permit producers in selected environmentally sensitive areas to receive a commodity program payment guarantee in exchange for producing according to a whole farm conservation plan." (USDA, 1995b, p. 8) Areas such as watersheds with critical natural resource problems associated with row crop agriculture would be identified, and a voluntary program would be established within each area. Participating farmers, in return for adopting an approved integrated natural resource plan, "would be assured over some specified time period (e.g. 10 years) a level of direct payments equivalent to estimated deficiency payments under provisions of the 1995 Farm Bill for that time." (USDA, 1995b, p. 8)

Annual Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) net outlays are estimated to average \$10.6 billion for fiscal years 1990 through 1995 (USDA, 1995a, p. 72). Some proposals now being discussed would make substantial reductions in these outlays in future years. Is it already too late to strike agreements that would, instead, divert significant portions of CCC funds to stewardship programs such as the proposed CFO? Perhaps it is. However, if that were to be done, agricultural interests in the Great Plains would have a strong stake in seeing that such stewardship programs are sufficiently encompassing to cover the natural resource concerns of this region.

ARE "MARGINAL" OR "RADICAL" CHANGES NEEDED?

Are "marginal" or "radical" changes in commodity policy needed? In light of the three forces described at the beginning of this paper, my response would be that radical changes are needed. At the very least, the time has come for NCA- or TAB-type

planting flexibility. That kind of flexibility is unlikely to provide adequate incentives for farmers, generally, to move toward more diverse and sustainable cropping systems, however. For that to happen, greater policy emphasis on stewardship programs would be needed. Other changes in commodity policy, some of a radical nature, also may be needed to address income targeting and structure of agriculture concerns being raised by society.

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