

USDA VIEWS ON FARMLAND RETENTION

Early 4:50 AM
Help! - I want to make
117A
CASTLE - RAIN
is not BAD weather
I am at home here - 4 daughters 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000
It has been a real pleasure to spend the morning with you. The

report

paper prepared by Dallas Miner on farmland retention issues in this area

with proper permission we intend to use it. is an important contribution. I would like to spend my time

Briefing you on

discussing the Department of Agriculture's activities, views, policies,

and forecasts as they concern the issue of keeping prime agricultural

lands for crop production.

As many of you know, this is not the first foray into land use

issues for USDA. In one way or another, our Department has a century-

long history of professional involvement in the land use field. And

this involvement has not always been strictly rural in nature. In 1967,

for example, we worked with the Department of Housing and Urban Development

to cosponsor a conference on Soil, Water, and Suburbia, here in the

Washington area. We didn't talk much about land use at that time, but

we could illustrate growing concern with the ways that the suburbanization

process was ravaging soil and water resources. Out of that tentative

beginning grew conferences on erosion and sediment control and many

concrete actions that have made the local governments and the states in

this region National leaders in the field of soil and water management

in urbanizing areas.

We meet today on another issue of considerable importance and

concern to the Department, but not one that lends itself to easy answers

or solutions. We have, after all, come through a long history of trying

to deal with surplus production. Switching from that long-term concern

Comments of Norman A. Berg to be presented at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Conference on Farmland Preservation at the University of Maryland, June 17, 1976.

over surpluses to concern over possible shortages is not easy. As the demand for food products continues to rise around the world, and the ability to produce food responds uncontrollably to such things as climatic variations ^{and} and economic factors, some years are going to be above the margin and other years below. 1974, for example, demonstrated how a severe combination of events could tighten food supplies uncomfortably.

As the food situation has ^{again} gained attention, there has been growing concern for the continuing conversion of the country's best agricultural lands into other uses. Many of these other uses are permanent, for all practical purposes, and it seems highly irrational to bury the best production lands only to face the possibility of developing more marginal lands or coming back at some later date to reclaim good lands at great expense.

^{partial} In response to this concern, the Department's Land Use Committee has been studying the issue of farmland retention ^{we needed to know} ~~to see~~ what kind of facts and understanding ^{we} ~~we~~ could develop ^{about} ~~about the issue~~ and to evaluate policy and program directions that may be needed now and in the future. In July of 1975 this committee convened a Seminar on the Retention of Prime Lands at Airlie House, Virginia. At that ^{mtg.} ~~seminar~~ some 80 experts ~~from across the country~~ were asked to consider the current situation and trends and provide the Department with their best judgment as to what we should be considering and where we should be going. In preparation for the conference, some 50 background papers were written and at the conclusion the conference recommendations were assembled in published form. Both of those publications are available for those who are interested.

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~~In its shortest form,~~ the main conclusion of that seminar was that the continuing conversion of prime production lands to other land uses is a matter of growing concern that will require a great deal of attention in the future. The Department of Agriculture was urged to take a major role in advocating the retention of the maximum possible base for the production of food, fiber, and timber products of our country. One recommendation read as follows: "It should be USDA policy to avoid, and to encourage others to avoid, the diversion of highly productive farm and forest lands to nonproductive uses wherever feasible alternatives exist."

Participants at the Prime Lands Seminar also recognized, however, the important limits ~~on~~ ^{of} any federal role in ^{Private} land use planning and control. While the Department was urged to take an active role in developing policies and programs to discourage the conversion of prime to other uses, it was also noted that the authority to control private land uses rests solidly with state and local governments.

This indicates, I think, a major policy outlook that has consistently marked the Department's approach to this issue. We are concerned about the retention of adequate land in farm production. We are looking very hard at Departmental policies and programs to assure that our own actions are not leading toward the unnecessary conversion of prime lands to other uses. We seek opportunities to encourage others to take a similar stance. But at the same time, we recognize that the real responsibility for determining which land will be ultimately urbanized and which will be retained in agriculture rests with the private owners of that property operating under land use controls of state and local governments.

Since the Prime Lands Seminar, the Department's agencies have been ~~carrying out a great deal of work~~^{in a} response to the recommendations. We have encouraged several states to conduct prime land workshops to draw out the views of people at the state and local level. To date, two workshops have been held, ~~in~~ Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. ^{Several} ~~More~~ are planned for this coming fall.

~~Some of the things we are learning~~^{ed} from these workshops are of considerable interest. *and will keep in future mtgs.*

We ~~are hearing~~ quite clearly, for instance, that the perspectives on farmland differ greatly between the federal, state and local levels. ~~And we are getting~~ the message that even though these perspectives are ~~very~~ different, they are all very real. In order to thoroughly assess the issues surrounding farmland, then, we need to understand all of these perspectives and add them up, so to speak, to get a total picture.

> First, it is becoming apparent that the National perspective is concerned mainly about the quality and quantity of the land, rather than the location. So long as we have "enough" corn land to meet National requirements, ^(nicest parts) it is not a significant concern at the ~~National~~^{my} level whether that land is in Maryland or Illinois. It is in the National interest to keep the most productive acres in the country available for *all* crop production should they ever be needed. National policy will be best served by encouraging continued production on those acres that give the highest return for each unit of energy and at the same time provide the most stable and nonpolluting environment for agriculture.

> A second perspective is seen at the local level. Here the most important concern appears to be the protection of management options

over land. Keeping viable economic farm units in production, protecting local economies, and preserving the nature of the community, including open space, visual quality and environmental quality are important issues. In many communities the retention of a lifestyle associated with agriculture is of key importance. Therefore, it appears that local values will often consider farm units rather than high quality acres. Many communities prize a dairy industry, ^{even though} supported by land of mediocre productivity.

➤ Somewhere between the local and National is a state perspective, more difficult to clearly articulate. In large measure, ~~it is~~ a concern for economic activity within the state.² This appears to be most clearly ^{expressed} ~~in~~ in those states that are either unique in some respects, or else are at the end of the food delivery line. In Massachusetts, for example, they place a very high importance on encouraging the maximum possible productivity on their limited farmlands. They feel uneasy about the problems that can be created by a disruption of energy supplies or transportation systems or some other unforeseen event. An indication of that concern was the title of their state workshop: Survival of Agriculture in an Urbanizing Environment.

Another state perspective is based on the state's responsibility to provide the legal and policy bases on which day-to-day land use decisions are made. Virtually every state is evaluating its current set of laws and authorities regarding land use to see whether the effect on agricultural land is harmful or beneficial.

➤ In addition to the views that emerge from different levels of government, there are perspectives that are regional in nature. We

don't hear the same story about agricultural land in California that we hear in Iowa or in Virginia. Completely different sets of issues are involved, based on the resource situation and the political and economic climate that exists there today.

➤ There is also a "people factor." At one workshop, speakers speculated about the existence of "three cultures" in the debate. One group are the urbanites, looking out toward the farmland with a feeling of dependence, knowing that their future well-being and food supply depend on that land. These are also the people who prize open space, visual quality, and similar farmland values. These people can become very concerned about the need to retain an adequate land base.

Another viewpoint, however, is that of the production farmer, who sees ~~the~~ land as a basic part of his business. In most instances, the land represents the farmer's most valuable asset and his major investment toward retirement. He, therefore, has mixed feelings about "preservation" programs. He recognizes that farmland must be retained for his business to survive, but at the same time he (wants) to be free to sell out for economic security in retirement. Therefore, a farmland preservation effort that lowers the salability of his property--or greatly reduces its value--will generate real concern and opposition.

A third group of people view land as a necessity for survival in an uncertain world. The back-to-the-land movement, although it is difficult to quantify, appears to be significant in some parts of the country.

Dallas

More and more families are leaving urban areas to live on 10, 20, or 40 "farmettes" in rural America. The concerns we hear from these people are about land availability, land prices, and suitable technology for small agricultural enterprises.

So, it appears that there are many layers of different perspectives on this issue. The federal, state, and local points of view are clearly different, and each is very important. Regional differences across our country are significant, ^{also} and the way ~~in which~~ people view this issue is often very different and, at times, conflicting.

What this suggests is a complex, plural issue that demands a complex, plural response. We need to develop ^{some} many tools at all levels of both public and private endeavor. This issue is not a rural or farm problem and it's not an urban problem. It is everyone's problem. Retaining an adequate agriculture cannot be considered separately from developing an efficient, high quality urban form.

There are important implications on local and state economic conditions, tax structures, and governmental revenues that can result from any policy to retain agricultural land. It is not always clear which way these are going to cut. There can be both positive and negative impacts from either "developing" or "protecting" farmland. Determining the direction and magnitude of these impacts in any situation is going to require a concentrated effort.

Land use decisions regarding agricultural land are going to be made on limited information. One tendency in the past, unfortunately, has been to see each land use change as a single event and assume that each single ^{are of} farmland loss is too small to be of any consequence. That is a dangerous strategy, however, that will need to be changed. Even though we do not know when the margin will be reached, or how serious our farmland problem will be at any given time, it is no longer acceptable to

view our farmland resource base as inexhaustable. There are limits, and we must respect them even though we can't firmly identify where they are. ^{per.} As a community and as a nation, we have the moral and ethical responsibility to avoid the waste of prime land resources for short term economic gain.

What does all this tell us as we look into the future? First, I think there is a growing commitment on the part of the Department of Agriculture to assist your efforts to evaluate the farmland situation in your region. As Secretary Butz ~~has~~ ^{now} pointed out, ^{USOA} ~~our Department~~ is concerned with land use alternatives and priorities, particularly those that involve the expenditure of federal funds. He has said, "Federal projects that take prime land from production should be initiated only when this action is clearly in the public interest." The federal government, if it is to be concerned about the retention of prime farmlands, needs to first minimize its own actions in taking them from production.

In response to another recommendation from the Prime Lands Seminar, the Department has ^{now} asked the Council on Environmental Quality to consider prime farmlands as an essential National resource to be considered in the development and review of environmental impact statements. The ^{historical} process of establishing National goals for preservation of ^{only} certain types of land has ^{already} led to restricting development on wetlands, flood plains, areas of archeological and historical significance, critical areas, coastal areas, and on and on and on. What this has essentially done is increase development pressure on the best farmland in the Nation. In our view that is no longer acceptable. This is not to say that there

won't be any future development on farmlands, ~~for~~ ^Y in some cases there will certainly need to be. What we are saying, however, is that ~~the~~ ^{we} Nation's people must begin to count the cost of developing farmlands and balance those costs against other options.

In many states, an intensive effort has been going on to develop state farmland programs. Maryland has been one of the leaders. New tools, such as programs to purchase and retire development rights or to establish transferable development rights are being discussed and, in some instances, moving toward the testing state. New Jersey appears to be close to a functioning program, but others are ~~being considered~~ ^{considered} as well. How well these programs will work is not clear at this point, but the Department is interested in assisting states develop and test these kinds of programs.

In addition, there is great need for action at the local levels you ~~are representing~~ here ~~today~~. You are, in the words of the television commercial, "where the rubber meets the road" on this issue. ~~It is~~ ^{your} programs, your actions, your policies and plans ~~that~~ will determine, in large measure, whether or not a viable agriculture will continue to exist in this metropolitan area. This afternoon's discussion will go into some details, I am sure, but let me simply leave with you the commitment of our Department.

The people at USDA have a personal stake in this region. When we go home at night, we take off our federal hat and become residents of the areas ^{we} you represent. Anne Brunzel (now home) felt pressure of you Santa Monica at dinner. This metropolitan area has been a pioneering leader in many aspects of land use control and management. Erosion and sediment control and

storm water management are two examples that come quickly to mind. You are heavily involved in areawide planning in response to Section 208 of the Water Pollution Control Act. You have the opportunity to deal with the issues of farmland retention in ways that provide leadership for the rest of the country. Obviously, this is going to take some work on your part. One recent land use study of the region listed agricultural lands as vacant--even though they make up nearly 70 percent of the region. You're going to have to do a better job than that of deciding what you have! You may need to set up some monitoring programs to know more about who owns the land--and how land use is changing.

But the time is right to do more, and you have started the process, it appears. We understand recent research indicates that there is a net out-migration from the Washington metropolitan area, and this may give you the breathing room you need to ^{try to} get ^{a decision} planning ahead of events. The Department of Agriculture is deeply interested in your efforts, wishes you every success, and stands ready to assist in whatever ways we can.

Dallas Miners 3 imp't assumptions
on p. 100 are valid!

- The time is here - the issue is
a good one - you can be a
hero - as an ad vocate - but

It is clear - we didn't promise

that L'se - your "it would be a bed of roses"
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