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BOOM & BUST: A TIMELINE OF FARM CONSERVATION & ECONOMICS

Agricultural Boom & Bust

“Boom and Bust” describes the linked history of both farm conservation practices and farm economics. Farm profitability boom and bust cycles affect soil, water, wildlife, farm products and communities. Federal farm commodity and conservation programs have strongly influenced farmers’ decisions for decades.

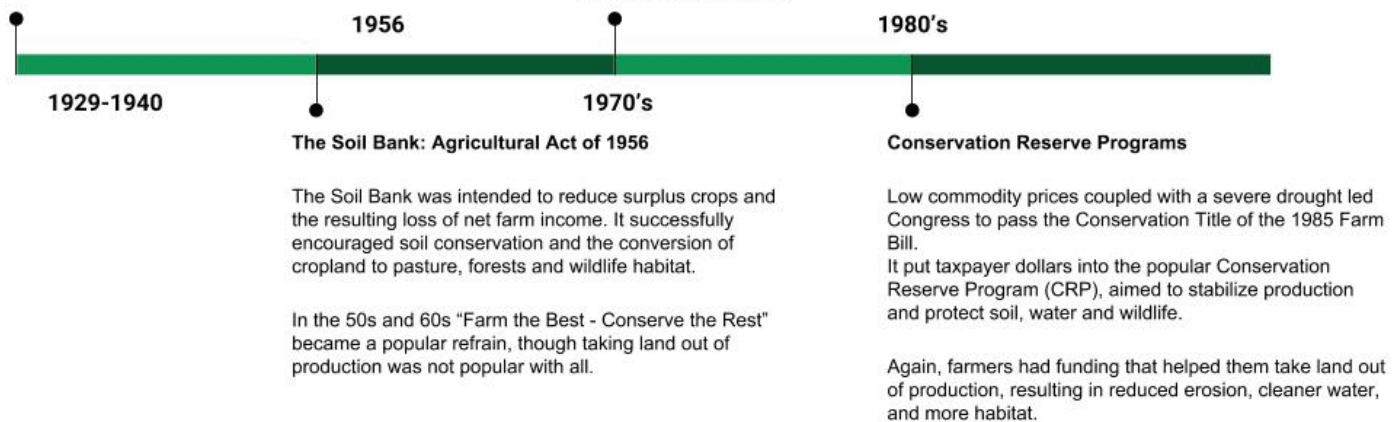
The Great Depression and Dust Bowl

Much fragile land fell under cultivation for crop income. Grasslands were converted to deeply-plowed crops.. Strong wind blew topsoil across the country, destroying crops and darkening the sky. The new federal Soil Conservation Service (SCS) emerged to combat the terrible erosion and help revive the land.

Farmers as an Economic Solution

Economists and corporate interests promoted America's farmers as the solution to the imbalance of foreign trade revenue leading to “fencerow-to-fencerow” farming, increasing incomes.

However, over-production lowered farm income, land values suffered, erosion increased, and wildlife and clean water were severely impacted.





NRCS Emerges

The SCS was renamed the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In the broadened role, the agency and farmers created new visions, conserved soils and more strongly favored wildlife habitat.

Modern Agricultural Trends

Chemicals used to increase production blamed for health risks to humans and animals including the decline in pollinators and butterflies.

While some farms prosper, many more disappeared. Farm size grew exponentially. Rural America struggled to maintain stable prosperity as land and water have degraded.

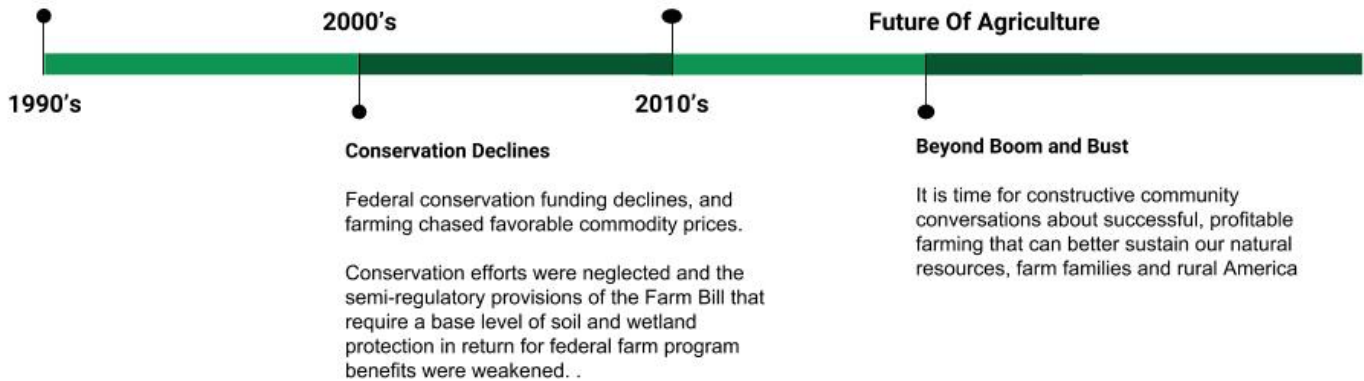


Photo Courtesy of USDA NRCS