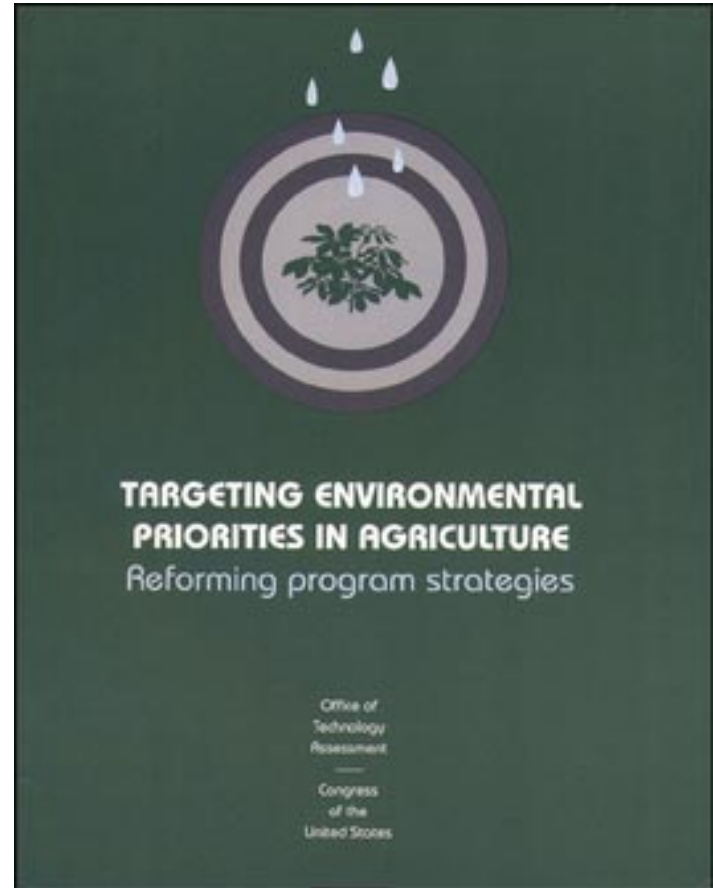


*Targeting Environmental Priorities in
Agriculture: Reforming Program Strategies*

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Foreword

Budget stress, political change, and heightened global competition are forcing a reexamination of conservation and environmental programs for U.S. agriculture. Questions about reauthorizing the Conservation Reserve Program typify the tradeoffs. Currently, that effort is the major solution to environmental problems related to agriculture. But what lands truly merit long-term retirement for environmental purposes at high cost to taxpayers and export markets? Are less expensive approaches available that save budget expense, allow continued production, and ameliorate other priority environmental problems?

This report responds to a bipartisan request from the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee about these issues. The analysis identifies priority environmental targets across the country for water quality, wildlife, and soil quality. A tripartite set of programs designed to lower cost and achieve more enduring solutions illustrates possible approaches to the targets. One program strategy, the development of a new generation of technologies that retain farm profits while achieving environmental gains, has received little emphasis but appears to hold considerable promise.

OTA greatly appreciates the contributions of the many people who helped make this report possible. These include the expert environmental panel, authors of background papers, and those who reviewed material for the report or gave valuable advice. As with all OTA studies, the content of this report is the sole responsibility of OTA.



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