

production. Between 1972 and 1973, principal crop acres increased by 24 million. However, the U.S. eliminated annual land set aside programs in the 1996 Farm Bill, causing principal crop acres to increase by 15.5 million between 1995 and 1996. Thus, no reserve of annual set-aside land existed when the current period of farm prosperity began. In fact, principal crop acres during the current period of prosperity have still not exceeded the 334 million acres planted to principal crops in 1996. Another factor is the role of conservation programs. Of particular relevance are the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which pays farms to produce environmental services as opposed to crops, and the sodbuster and swampbuster provisions, which prevent farms from bringing these types of land into crop production. These 3 conservation programs were first enacted in the 1985 Farm Bill. Approximately 25 million acres are currently enrolled in CRP. In addition, approximately 2 million acres are enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program. Two additional points are worth making. First, the expansion in corn acres since 2005 (15 million) has mostly come from acres planted to other crops. This realignment of acres may be causing unease among ag