



Master Farmer Program

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Objective

- The Louisiana *Master Farmer Program* is a multi-agency effort targeted at helping agricultural producers **voluntarily** address the environmental concerns related to production agriculture.



Why was the program developed?

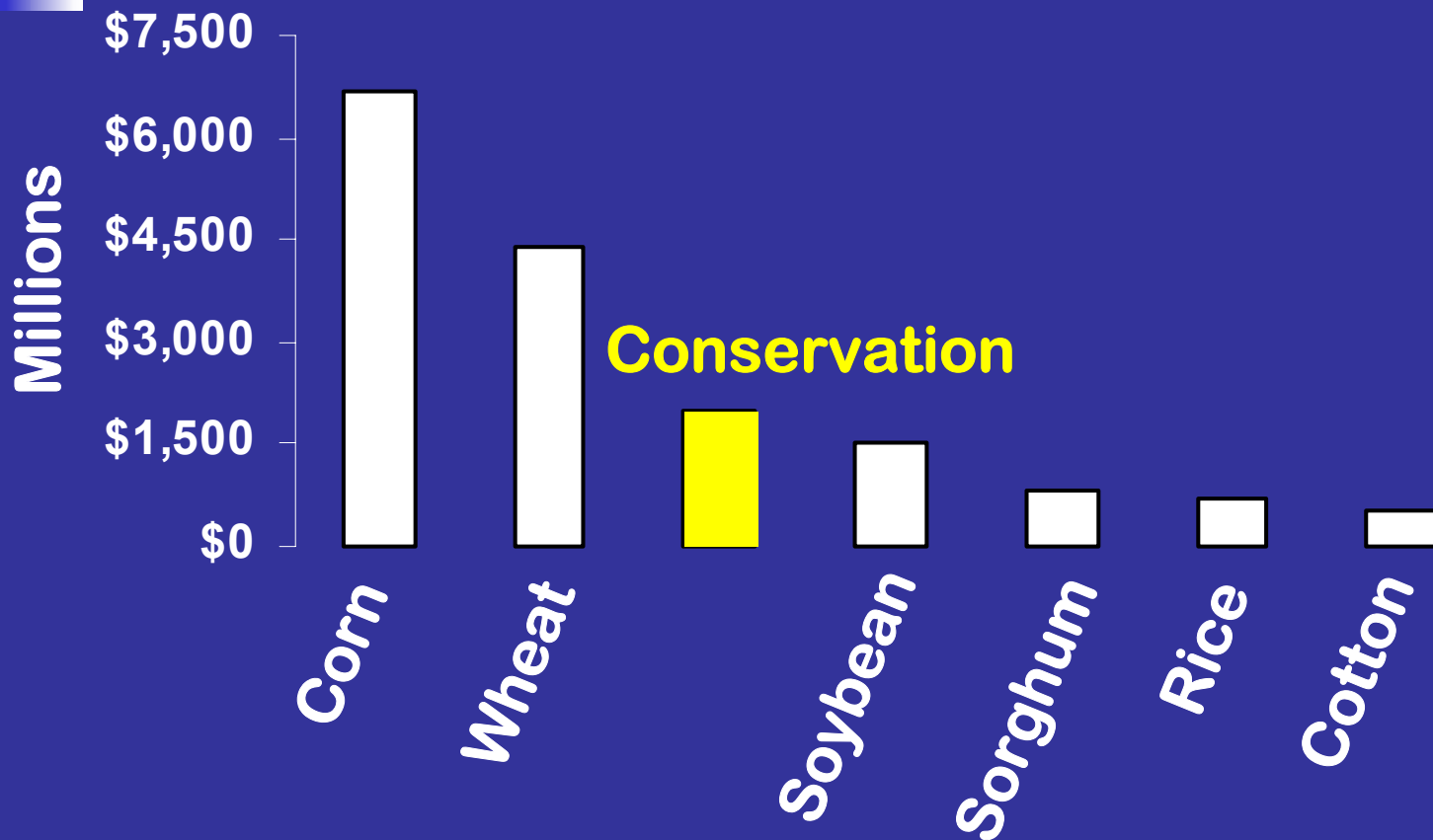
1. Increased threat of environmental regulations (TMDLs)



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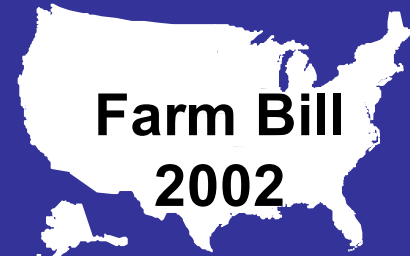
1. Increased threat of environmental regulations (TMDLs)
2. Increased funding for local level conservation in 2002 Farm Bill

Conservation has become a major “program crop”



Source: Environmental Working Group (2001)

Conservation in the 2002 Farm Bill



- Over \$17.1 billion in the Conservation Title of the 2002 Farm Bill
- Emphasis on working lands programs
- New multi-functional programs
- Conservation will be key for continued public support of farm payments



Why was the program developed?

1. Increased threat of environmental regulations (TMDLs)
2. Increased funding for local level conservation in 2002 Farm Bill
3. Producer demand for a comprehensive program to address environmental concerns



**Agriculture Must Take the
Lead in Linking
Agricultural Viability and
Environmental
Stewardship**



Master Farmer Initiative

- **Multi-agency effort sponsored by the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation**
- **Implemented by watershed, with the AgCenter's watershed agent coordinating the program**
- **Targets all agricultural producers**
- **Voluntary**



Louisiana Master Farmer Program Collaborations/Partnerships





To become a certified Master Farmer, a producer must:

- Attend the 8 hour environmental stewardship lecture
- Attend model farm field day or virtual model farm workshop
- Develop and implement a farm-specific conservation plan



Phase 1: Environmental Education

- **Conducted at the parish level**
- **Specific topics addressed include:**
 - **The Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972**
 - **National & Louisiana water quality standards**
 - **Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)**
 - **Impacts of NPS Pollution on the Coastal Zone**
 - **Best Management Practices (BMPs)**
 - **Role of Conservation Districts in conservation planning and implementation**
 - **The NRCS Planning Process**
 - **Conservation Programs**



Phase 2: Model Farms

- **Representative farms for each watershed**
- **BMP demonstrations**
- **Water quality monitoring**
- **Education and outreach**

Model Farms

Poultry
Beef Cattle

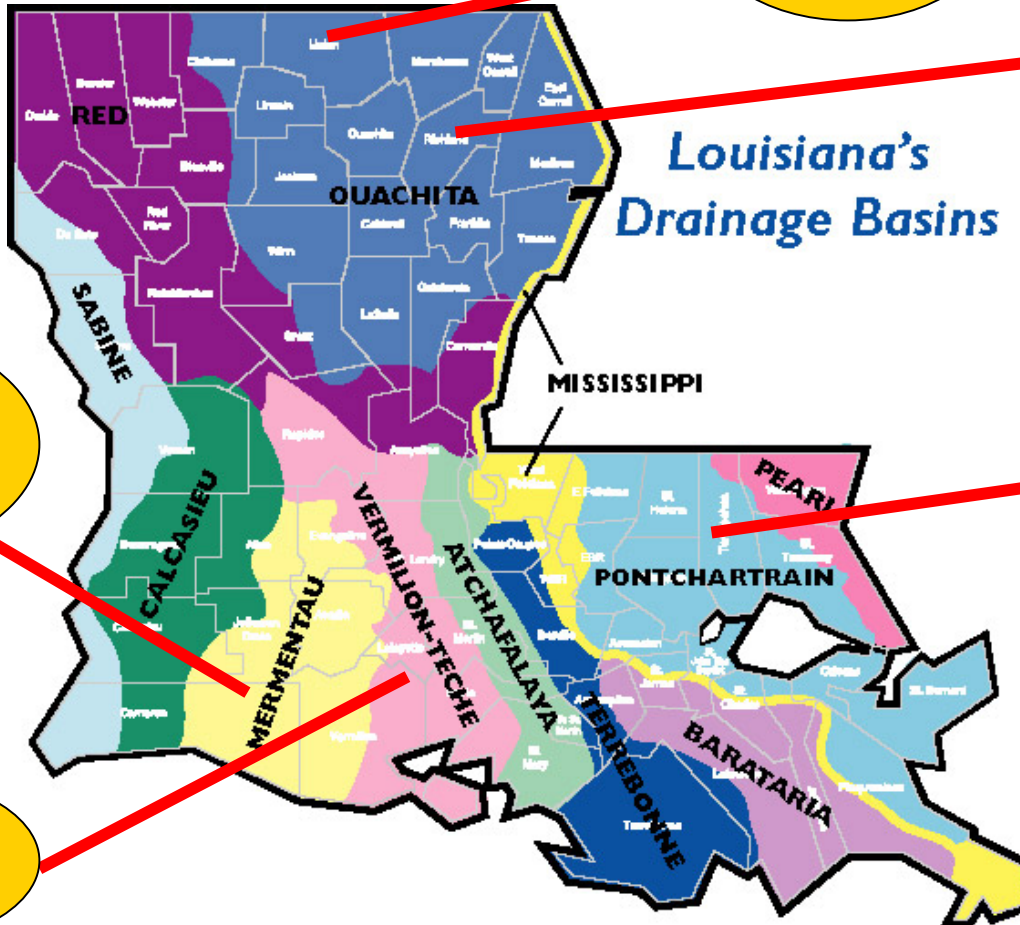
Cotton
Soybeans
Corn

Louisiana's
Drainage Basins

Rice, Soybeans
Crawfish
Beef Cattle

Beef Cattle
Dairy

Sugarcane





Phase 3: Conservation Plans

- **Development and implementation of farm-specific conservation plans**
- **Plans will be developed by the NRCS working with the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts**



Louisiana Presumption of Compliance Legislation

- The purpose of this legislation is to certify farmers and ranchers, who have enrolled in and complete the requirements of the program, as master farmers.
- Requirements include:
 - Attend 8 hour environmental stewardship lecture
 - Attend model farm field day or virtual model farm workshop
 - Develop a farm-specific conservation plan
- The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) is the certifying agency for presumption of compliance.



Louisiana Presumption of Compliance Legislation

- The NRCS and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts will provide verification to LDEQ that the farmer or rancher has implemented the specific comprehensive conservation plan, recommended for that farming operation.
- Upon receiving official verification from NRCS and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, LDEQ shall issue a document of certification to the applicant, which states that the applicant's agricultural operation is in presumed compliance with State soil and water conservation standards.
- To maintain certification, the farmer or rancher agrees to actively maintain his specific comprehensive conservation plan and maintain Master Farmer certification continuing education requirements.



Outstanding Master Farmer Award

- Reward exemplary commitment to the program
- Annually recognize six Master Farmers in Louisiana who have realized the environmental and economic benefits of implementing conservation, promotes innovative approaches to local-level conservation and demonstrates excellence in the Louisiana Master Farmer Program
- 6 winners will receive a \$1,000 award donated by the Louisiana Association of Conservation Districts
- Recognized at the Annual Farm Bureau Convention

Program Status:

- Around 1150 producers participating (since January 2002)
- Almost 1 million acres enrolled





Why should a producer participate in the program?

- Decreased threat of regulation
- TMDLs are not going to go away regardless of who is in administration
- Regulatory agencies allowing states and nonpoint source contributors to develop their own solution before they develop one for us
- Education to make better decisions on what practices to implement based on sound-science, economics and environmental benefits
- Voluntary program
- Conservation program funding (\$17.1 billion) is an additional source of income considering depressed commodity prices
- Presumption of compliance (in Louisiana, Farm Bureau has included this in their legislative package this year)
- Other innovative state developed incentives to certified Master Farmers (tax breaks, etc.)
- Environmental Stewardship recognition from both fellow farmers and the public



Multi-State Master Farmer Program

- Benefits:
 - Strength in numbers
 - Better leverage for funding as multi-state initiative under one programming name
 - Already recognized by EPA, USDA, and CSREES as a means of addressing agricultural nonpoint source pollution
 - Recognized by producers in several states
 - Suggested by former Chief of NRCS as priority for CSP payments



A Master Farmer will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of and dedication to environmental stewardship
- Demonstrate mastery levels of conservation-based production
- Demonstrate resource management through the implementation of a comprehensive conservation plan
- Promote the success of local-level conservation to the agricultural community and public and private interests