

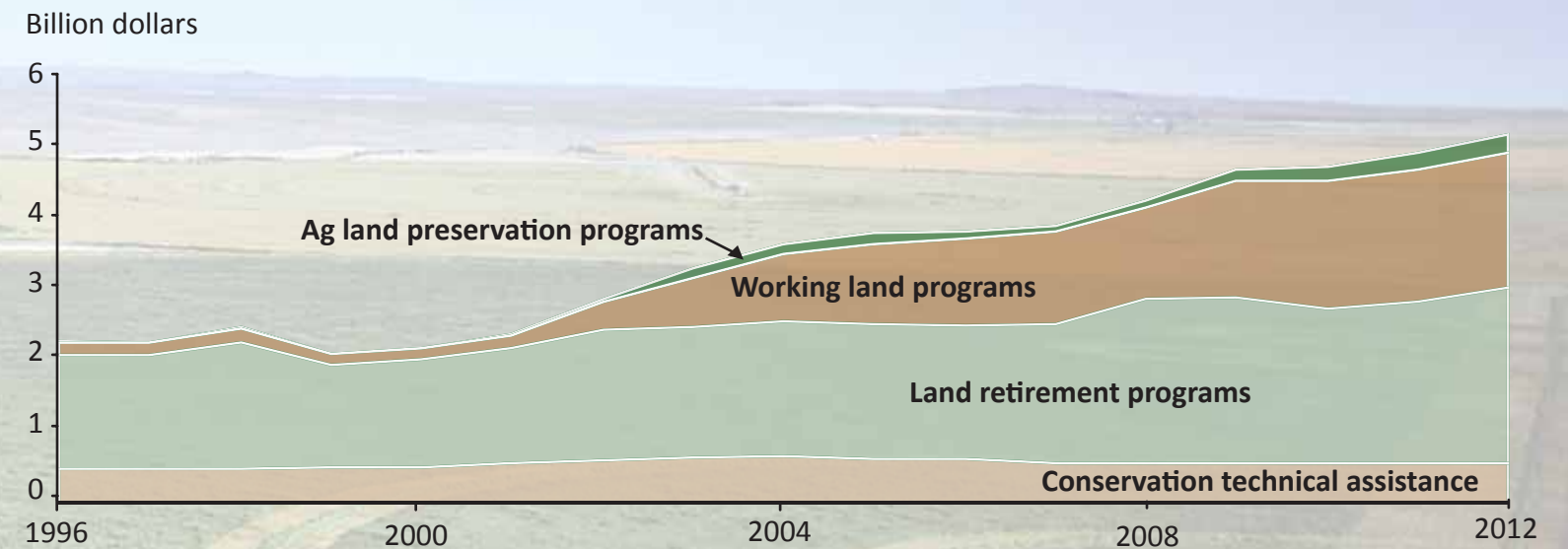
Transforming “Working Lands” Conservation Budgets into Environmental Gains

Since 2002, Federal expenditures have increased for all major conservation programs, though the majority of new money has gone to “working land” programs that support conservation on farmland.

Spending increases alone, however, do not guarantee cost-effective returns. The details of conservation program design—eligibility rules, participation incentives, and rules for accepting (or rejecting) applications—can help ensure that program funding goes to those in the best position to make environmental improvements.

Program designers can maximize returns by targeting producers, land, and practices that deliver a high level of environmental gain per dollar of program payment. Conservation program enrollment can be seen as a “winnowing” process to determine who participates and, ultimately, program outcomes, including changes in environmental quality and farm income.

Spending for Major USDA Conservation Programs



Conservation Program Enrollment as a Winnowing Process

