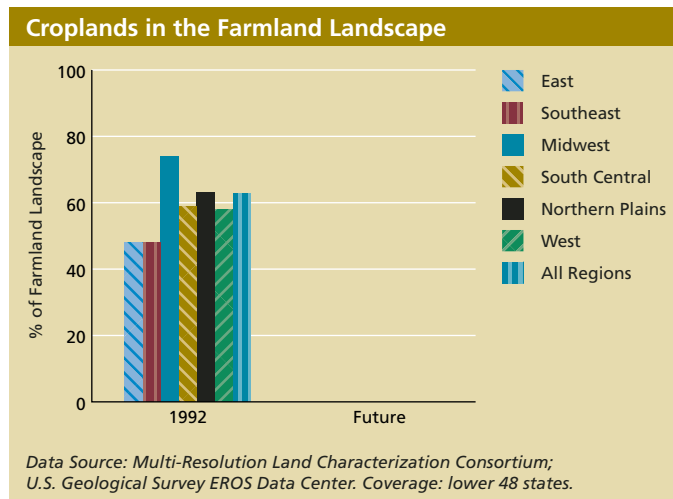




SYSTEM DIMENSIONS	CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL	BIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	HUMAN USES
Extent	Nutrients, Carbon, Oxygen	Plants and Animals	Food, Fiber, and Water
Pattern	Contaminants Physical	Communities Ecological Productivity	Recreation and Other Services

## ● The Farmland Landscape

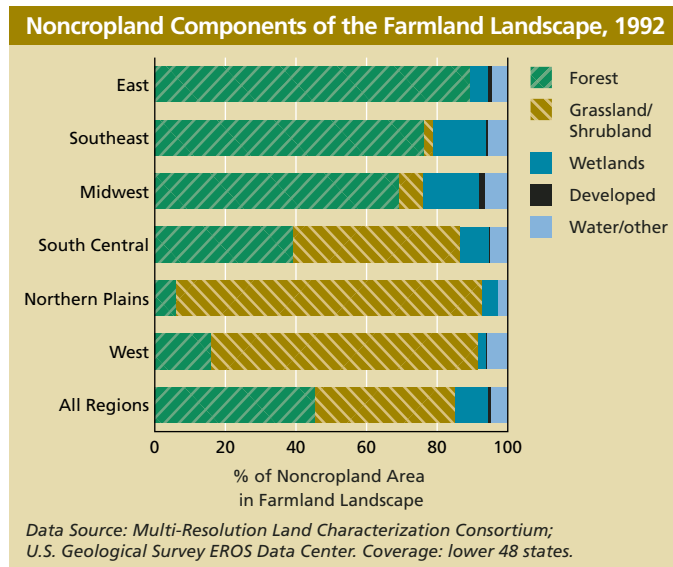


### What Is this Indicator, and Why Is It Important?

This indicator reports the percentage of the farmland landscape that is actively used for crop production, pasture, or haylands (i.e., croplands, see p. 91). The “farmland landscape” includes croplands and the forests or woodlots, wetlands, grasslands and shrublands, and the like that surround or are intermingled with them. This indicator describes the degree to which croplands dominate the landscape, or, conversely, the degree to which these other lands are intermingled.

This indicator also describes the composition of the noncropland portion of the farmland landscape by reporting the percentage of these lands that are forests, grasslands and shrublands, wetlands, developed areas, and other lands and waters.

The noncropland elements of the farmland landscape (other than developed) provide wildlife habitat, serve as streamside buffers and windbreaks, and lend a distinctive visual character to the landscape. (Pasture and haylands are intermediate in character between “natural” grasslands and cultivated croplands; for this indicator, they are counted as croplands.)



**What Do the Data Show?** In the East and Southeast, croplands make up about half of the overall farmland landscape; most of the remainder is forest and, in the Southeast, wetlands. In the Midwest, only about a quarter of the farmland landscape is something other than croplands; forests and wetlands dominate the noncropland areas in this region as well.

About 60% of the farmland landscape is croplands in the South Central, Northern Plains, and Western regions.

Grasslands and shrublands dominate the noncropland portion of the Western and Northern Plains regions; in the South Central region, forests and grasslands and shrublands are about equal in area.

**Discussion** This indicator should, over time, be sensitive to the expansion of urban and suburban land use into farmland areas as well as to the conversion of forest, grassland, or other land cover to cropland. However, the data reported here do not measure very low density “exurban” development (more than scattered rural settlements, but less dense than “suburban”).

The farmland landscape reported here is defined using satellite land cover data. Areas dominated by cropland are included, along with their immediate surroundings (see the technical note for details). Note also that identifying wetlands on croplands is difficult; wetlands data should be interpreted cautiously.

The technical note for this indicator is on page 231.