ERASMUS-EDU-2023-CBHE
Project number: 101129032

Duration: 36 months
(01/01/2024 – 31/12/2026)

LESLIE
LAND MANAGEMENT
ENVIRONMENT &
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FERGANA
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# MICRO-CREDENTIAL

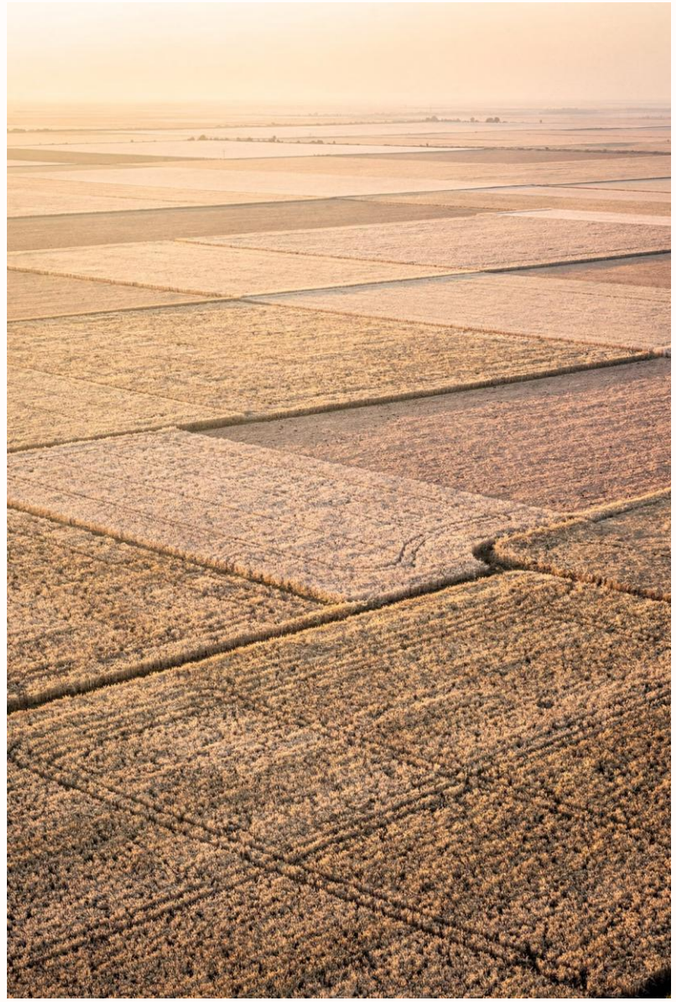
# LAND MANAGEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA

## 5.- Land Use Concept and Forms

## *Land Use and Production*

*LM-W05-V33*

# Land Use and Production: Feeding a Growing World



A comprehensive exploration of how humanity manages its most precious resource — land — to sustain a rapidly growing global population while navigating economic, environmental, and political pressures.

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# The Foundation: Where Does Our Food Come From?

Before we can understand the future of food production, we must understand the foundation — the land itself. This chapter examines how agricultural land is distributed, utilized, and structured across the globe, with a particular focus on the United Kingdom as a case study in modern land management.

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# The Global Land Puzzle

The world's agricultural footprint is surprisingly stable. Total Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) has remained between **17–18 million hectares globally** since the year 2000 — a remarkable plateau given population growth. This means that productivity, not expansion, is driving most output gains.

**17–18M**

**Global UAA (ha)**

Stable since 2000

**69%**

**UK Land in Agriculture**

17M hectares total

**80ha**

**Avg. UK Farm Size**

Half are under 20ha

In the UK, agriculture commands an outsized share of the landscape: **17 million hectares**, representing **69% of the total landmass** as of 2024. The average UK farm covers 80 hectares, yet nearly half of all farms fall under 20 hectares — highlighting a landscape shaped by smallholders and family operations as much as large commercial enterprises.

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# Where Will New Production Come From?

With agricultural land area largely fixed, the world must look inward — squeezing more from existing fields or carefully opening new ones. Both pathways carry significant trade-offs.

### Yield Gains on Existing Land

Advanced seeds, precision inputs, and improved agronomic practices can dramatically increase output per hectare without expanding the agricultural footprint. This is the preferred path for environmentally conscious production.

### Expansion onto New Land

Bringing marginal or previously uncultivated land into production can meet demand, but risks biodiversity loss, deforestation, and soil degradation if not managed carefully with sustainable land-use frameworks.

### Balancing the Equation

Meeting growing global demand requires a delicate balance — maximizing existing productivity while any land expansion adheres to strict environmental and social standards. Neither path alone is sufficient.

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## A Diverging Demand Story

Per capita cereal demand is projected to rise significantly by 2050, but the growth is far from uniform. Developing regions — particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia — are driving the steepest increases as populations grow and diets diversify toward more grain-based calories.

Developed regions show slower growth as consumption patterns mature. The critical challenge lies in ensuring that key producing regions — the US Corn Belt, the Eurasian steppe, and South American breadbaskets — can reliably deliver these production increases year after year.

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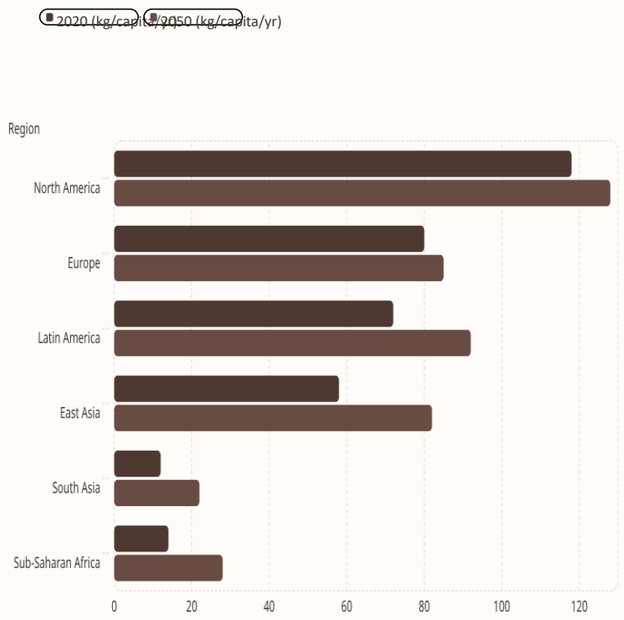
# Per Capita Meat Demand to 2050




Rising incomes in developing nations are fueling a global shift toward protein-rich diets. Meat consumption is projected to climb substantially by 2050, placing enormous additional pressure on land resources — not just for grazing, but for the feed crops that underpin industrial livestock systems.

Producing 1 kg of beef requires roughly **7–10 kg of grain feed** and up to **15,000 liters of water**. As East Asia and Latin America increase consumption fastest, the land implications are staggering — demanding smarter, more efficient production systems across the entire protein supply chain.

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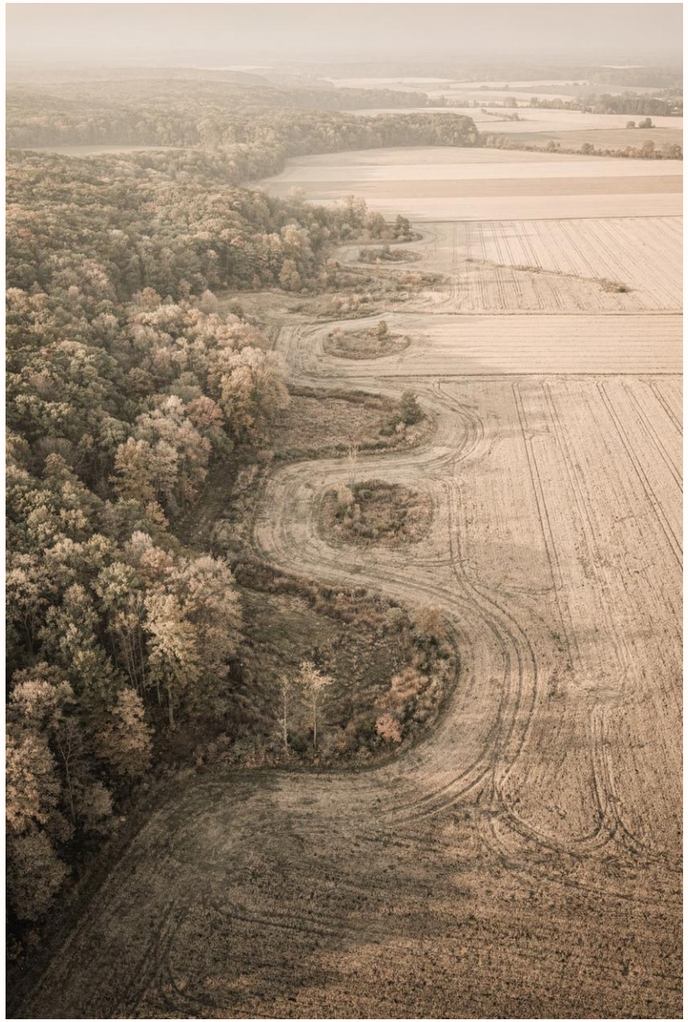
# The Shifting Landscape: Drivers of Land Use Change



Agricultural land does not exist in a vacuum. Economic forces, energy policy, global trade, and a changing climate all reshape how land is used from year to year and decade to decade. Understanding these drivers is essential to anticipating where — and how — production will evolve.

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# The Biofuel Boom: A Double-Edged Sword

## The US: Corn for Ethanol

The US Renewable Fuel Standard fundamentally reshaped American agriculture. Ethanol demand pulled corn acreage dramatically upward — reaching nearly **20 million additional acres** by 2013. Farmers responded rationally to price signals, converting pasture and even conservation land into corn fields, often at significant ecological cost.

## Mozambique: Displacing Food Crops

In Mozambique, land allocated to export crops — including biofuel feedstocks — declined fastest among all land-use categories, as small-scale farmers were displaced or incentivized away from subsistence food production. This illustrates a global tension: energy policy in wealthy nations can directly undermine food security in developing ones.

The biofuel mandate created a structural competition between fuel and food — a debate that continues to shape agricultural and energy policy worldwide.

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# Fueling Cars vs. Feeding People

Every acre planted for biofuels is an acre no longer available for food. As energy policy drives crop choices across millions of hectares, communities dependent on local food production bear the most direct consequences — a global equity challenge embedded in every tankful of ethanol.

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# Export Markets and Global Trade

## US Agricultural Export Surge

Between 2000 and 2013, US exports of fruit, grain, meat, and dairy products nearly **tripled to $140.9 billion**. This export boom incentivized farmers to maximize production, influencing land-use decisions across the entire country and putting pressure on conservation lands.

## China' s Shifting Import Strategy

China's gradual relaxation of domestic food self-sufficiency policies has led to dramatically increased feed grain imports. This strategic pivot ripples through global land markets — when China buys more soybeans, farmers in Brazil, Argentina, and the US respond by planting more, reshaping land use on multiple continents simultaneously.

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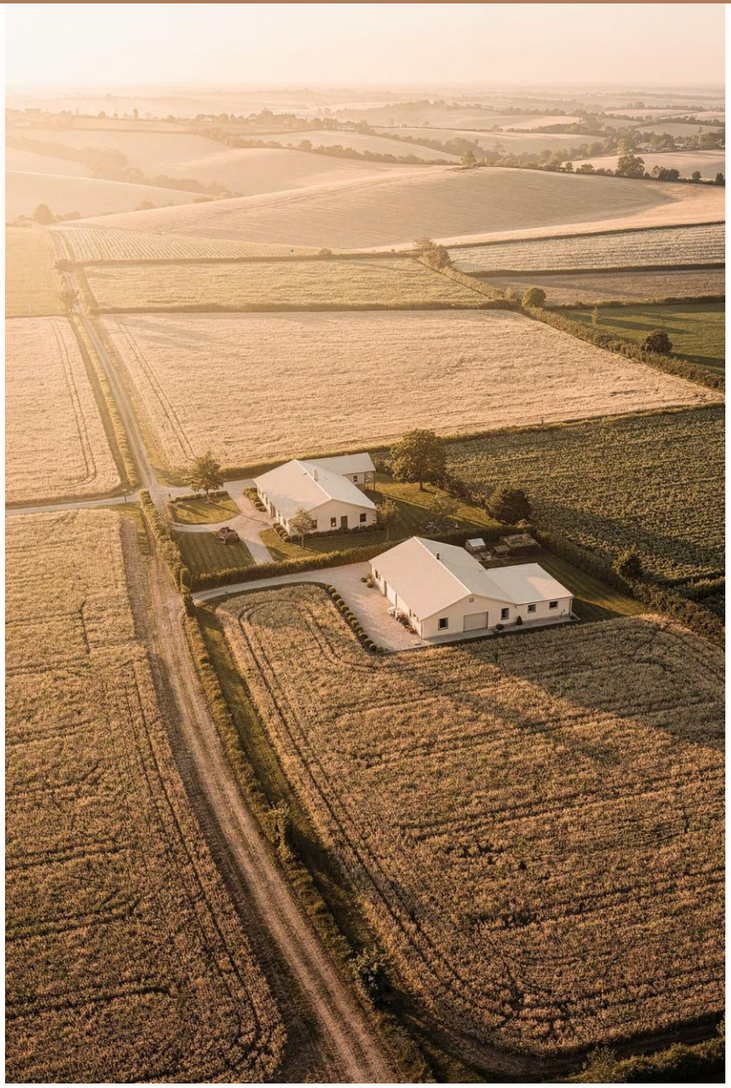
# Economic Factors and Investment



## Commodity Price Signals

Price outlooks for corn, soybeans, and wheat are among the most powerful short-term drivers of planting decisions. When corn prices surge — as during the 2012 drought — farmers respond by maximizing corn acreage, sometimes converting land enrolled in conservation programs. Understanding these market signals is essential for anticipating agricultural land use trends.

## Farmland as a Financial Asset

Housing bubbles, stock market volatility, and economic recessions have repeatedly prompted investors to turn to farmland as a stable, tangible asset class. This financialization of agriculture can drive up land prices, making it harder for working farmers to acquire or retain land, and can prioritize return on investment over sustainable food production.

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# Climate Change: A Growing Influence

Climate change is not a future threat to agriculture — it is already reshaping which crops can profitably grow where, and at what cost.

## Shifting Production Zones

Profitable growing regions are moving poleward as temperatures rise, opening some new areas while rendering traditional agricultural zones increasingly marginal or unviable.

## Extreme Weather Events

Floods, hailstorms, and late frosts cause direct crop damage and infrastructure losses, increasing production risk and insurance costs for farmers worldwide.

## Shifting Pest Pressures

Warmer winters allow pest and disease populations to expand into new geographies, requiring new management strategies and increasing the cost and complexity of crop protection.

## Drought and Yield Loss

Severe droughts — increasing in frequency and intensity — reduce crop yields unpredictably, threatening food supply stability and forcing costly irrigation investments in previously rain-fed regions.

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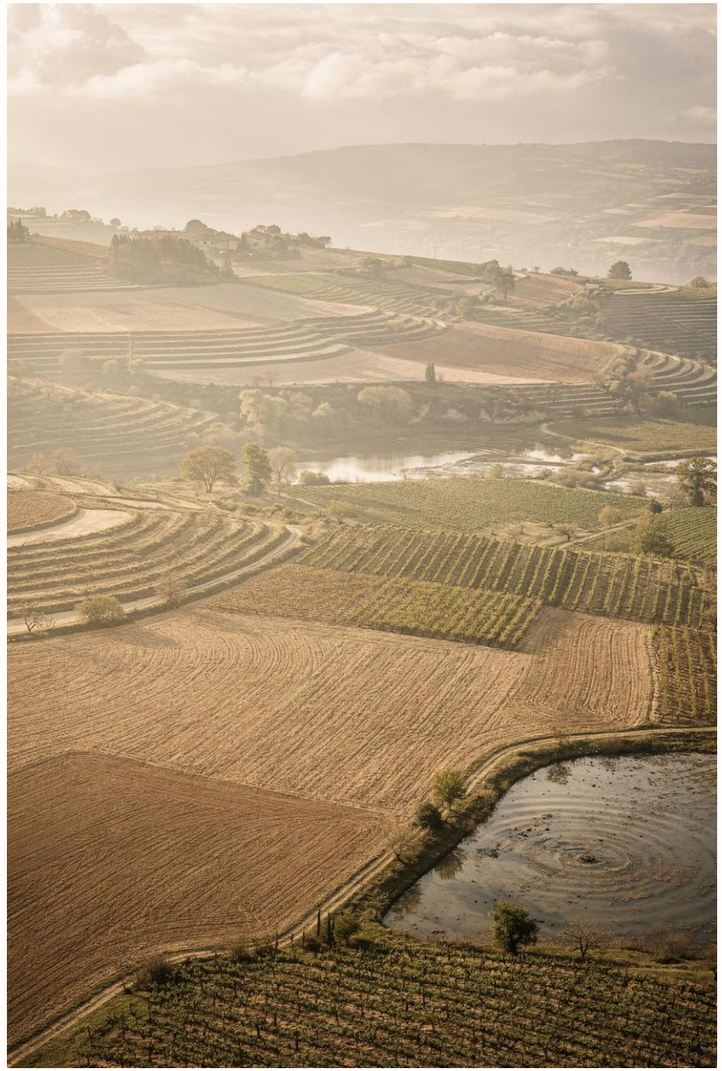
# Regional Impacts and Case Studies



Global trends manifest differently across regions. From the US Corn Belt to the English countryside, local policy, geography, and economic conditions shape how land-use pressures play out — and who bears their consequences.

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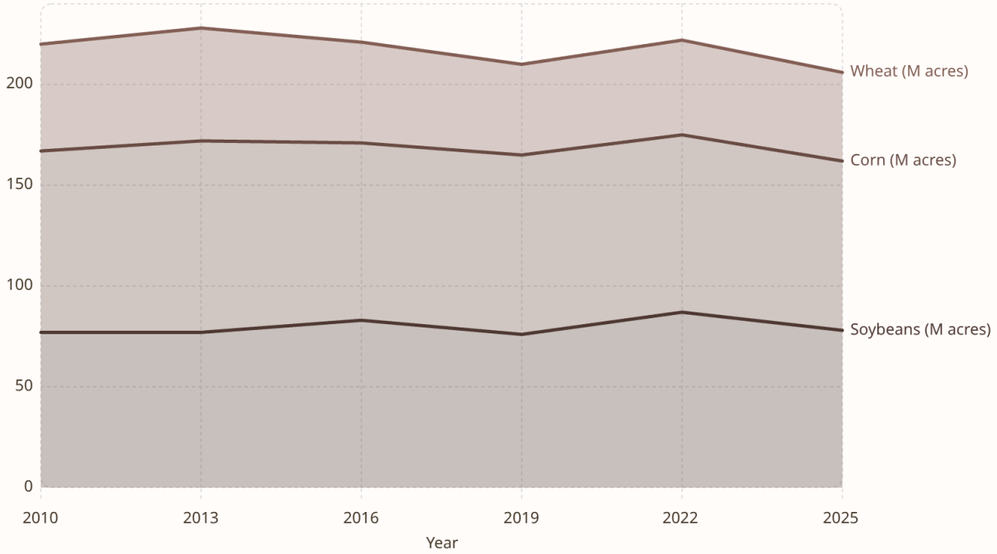
# US Agricultural Land Use Trends




The US agricultural landscape is undergoing a slow but significant structural shift. Conversion of farmland to developed uses — housing subdivisions, commercial areas, and infrastructure — has consumed millions of acres of productive cropland over recent decades.

Looking ahead, soybeans are projected to hover around **78 million acres** as a stable anchor crop. Corn acreage faces gradual decline as biofuel mandates stabilize and competition from soybeans intensifies. Wheat acreage is on a longer-term downtrend, squeezed by lower profitability relative to row crops and declining domestic consumption.

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# US Conservation Programs: The CRP Story

## What is the CRP?

The Conservation Reserve Program pays farmers to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production, replacing crops with grasses, trees, or wetland vegetation. It is one of the largest private-land conservation programs in the world.

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## A Program Under Pressure

Enrolled land has **steadily declined since 2008** as high commodity prices made active farming more attractive than conservation payments. With contracts on millions of acres set to expire, a wave of land could re-enter cropland production — reshaping soil health, water quality, and local wildlife habitat across the Great Plains and Midwest.

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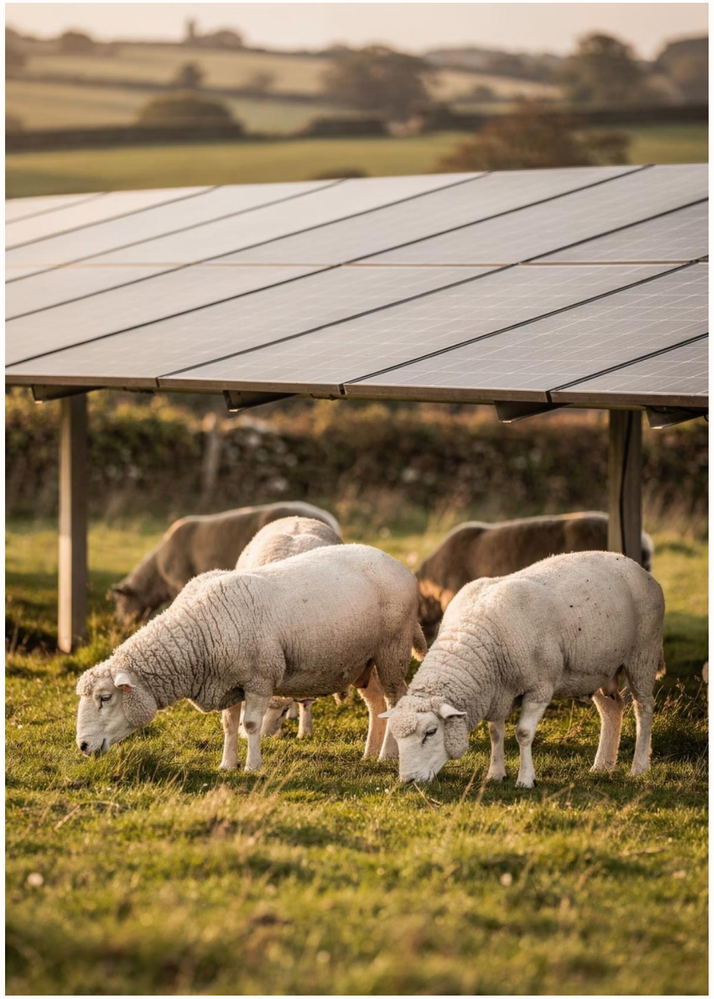
# Land Use for Renewable Energy in England



## Energy Crops and Solar

England has committed **100,000 hectares** to energy crops — including miscanthus, short rotation coppice, and maize grown specifically for biogas and biomass energy production. These crops represent a deliberate policy trade-off: replacing some food production in exchange for low-carbon energy generation.

Solar energy has also staked a claim on agricultural land, with **7,000 hectares** now covered by solar panels. Encouragingly, roughly **50% of these sites** continue to support agricultural production or grazing beneath and around the panels — the emerging practice of agrivoltaics — demonstrating that energy and food production need not always compete.

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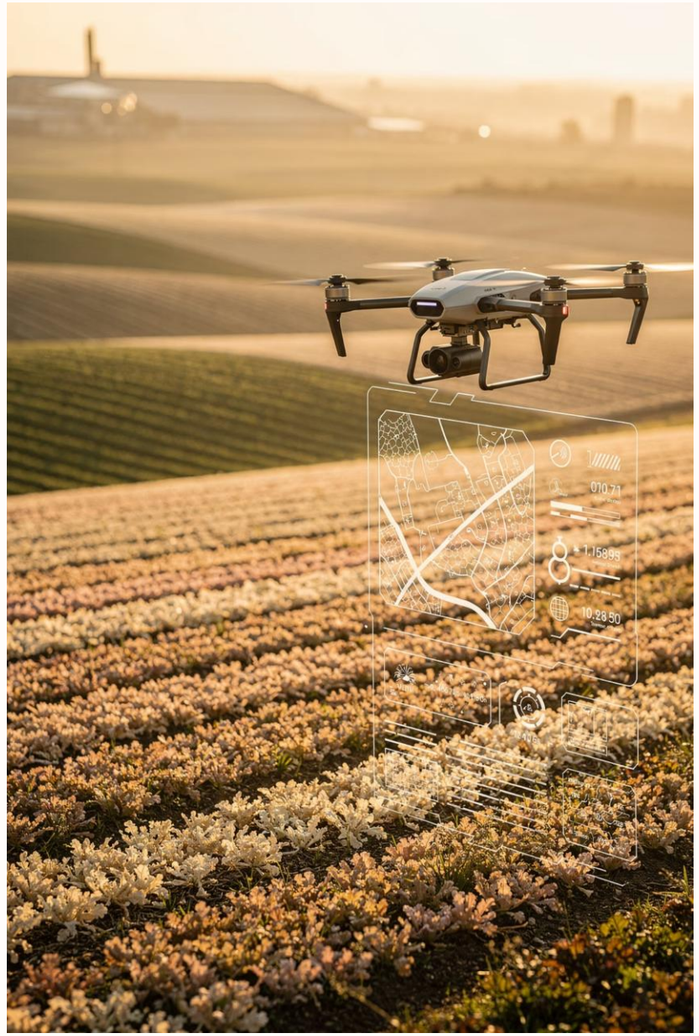
# The Future of Land Use and Production



Technology, policy, and data are converging to reshape how we understand, manage, and optimize agricultural land. From satellite mapping to farm bill provisions, the tools of the future are already being deployed — with profound implications for production geography and food security.

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# Farm Bill Provisions and Their Impact

### ARC and PLC: Base Acreage Lock-In

The Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs are tied to **historic base acreage** rather than current plantings. This creates a structural incentive — or disincentive — for farmers considering adding new corn acres, since new land may not qualify for support payments, potentially dampening expansion onto marginal lands.

### Conservation Compliance and Crop Insurance

Re-linking conservation compliance requirements to federal crop insurance eligibility could be one of the most powerful policy tools available. By requiring farmers on highly erodible land or wetlands to follow conservation plans in order to receive subsidized insurance, policymakers can directly influence planting decisions on the most environmentally sensitive marginal lands.

Millions of acres classified as marginal — too fragile for intensive row cropping but potentially profitable at high commodity prices — sit at the intersection of these policy choices. How Farm Bill provisions are structured directly determines whether these lands stay in grass, enter conservation programs, or get plowed for crops.

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# The Role of Technology: Mapping US Agriculture

## The Cropland Data Layer

The USDA's **Cropland Data Layer (CDL)** represents a revolution in agricultural intelligence. By fusing satellite remote sensing imagery with ground-truth data from farm surveys, the CDL produces annual, field-level maps of crop types and land cover across the entire contiguous United States.

This technology enables analysts, policymakers, and farmers to track land-use change in near real-time — identifying which fields switched from corn to soybeans, where new land was broken out of grass, and how conservation program enrollments are shifting across landscapes. It is the foundation of modern agricultural land-use monitoring.

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# Data-Driven Production Estimates

## USDA NASS Reports

The National Agricultural Statistics Service publishes regular, statistically rigorous reports on planted and harvested acreage, yield per acre, and total production for every major crop — from corn and soybeans to cotton and sugarcane.

## Acreage and Yield Data

Detailed county-level breakdowns allow analysts to identify regional production trends, assess the impact of weather events on yields, and model how policy or price changes might shift planting decisions across the country.

## Market Impact

NASS reports are among the most market-moving publications in global commodity markets. Planting intentions surveys and production estimates directly influence futures prices for corn, wheat, and soybeans on exchanges worldwide.

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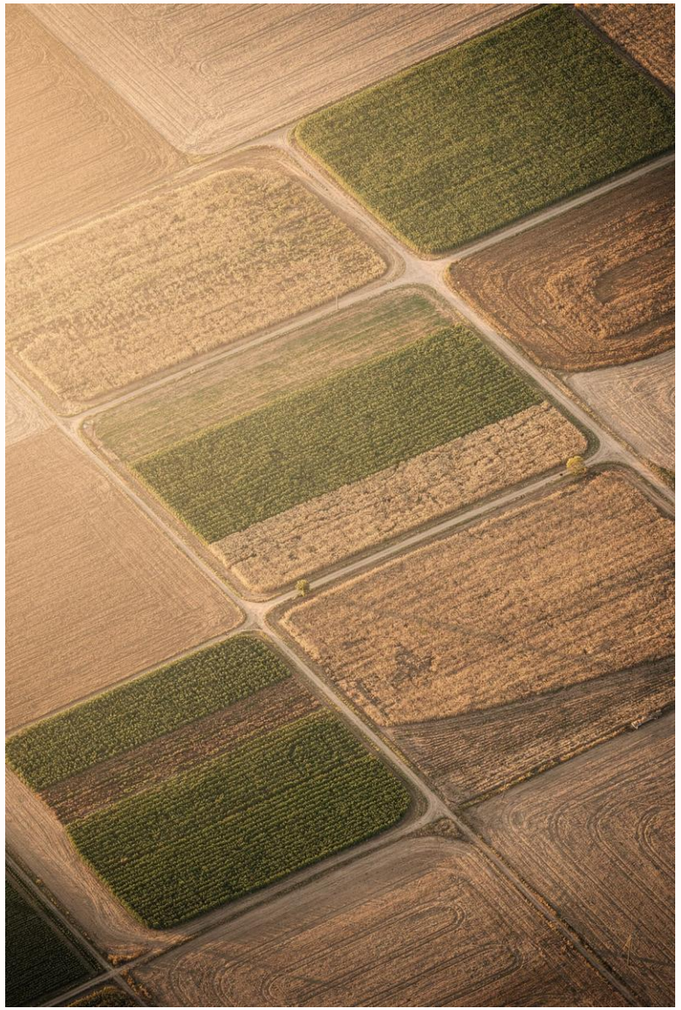
# Precision Agriculture: Seeing the Future of Farming



Satellite imagery now enables us to map every field, track every crop, and measure every yield — transforming data into decisions at global scale. The marriage of remote sensing, machine learning, and agronomic expertise is redefining what's possible in agricultural land management.

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# Challenges in Food Security

## Malnutrition Persists

Despite remarkable global production gains, child malnutrition remains a **critical concern across Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa**. The challenge is not purely one of production volume — it is a complex web of access, affordability, distribution, and local agricultural capacity.

## How Markets Affect Households

Impact pathway analysis reveals how global price spikes — triggered by drought in a distant breadbasket, an export ban, or a currency shock — cascade through supply chains to affect household food security at the local level. A poor harvest in the US Corn Belt can translate into a child skipping meals in Nairobi. Understanding these linkages is essential for designing resilient food systems.

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# Concluding Thoughts: Balancing Competing Needs

The central challenge of our era is clear: humanity must produce more food, more sustainably, on roughly the same amount of land — while simultaneously managing demands for energy, conservation, and economic development.

### Strategic Land Use Planning

Meeting both food and fuel demands requires integrated, science-based land use frameworks that prioritize the highest-value uses for every hectare.

### Yield Enhancement and Innovation

Closing the yield gap between best-practice and average farms worldwide could nearly double global food production without adding a single acre of new cropland.

### Sustainable Policy Design

Farm bills, conservation programs, and trade agreements must be designed with long-term sustainability as a core objective — not just short-term production maximization.

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# The Path Forward: Sustainable Production for a Growing Planet

The future of land use and production will be defined by the choices we make today — in our research priorities, our policy frameworks, and our global cooperation. Technology alone cannot solve the challenge; neither can policy without innovation. The path forward requires all three working in concert.

### 🌐 Global Cooperation

Coordinated trade policy and data sharing to stabilize markets and prevent food crises.

### 🔬 Technology Integration

Precision agriculture, genomic crop improvement, and digital decision tools deployed at scale.

### ⚖️ Equity and Access

Ensuring that production gains translate into improved nutrition and livelihoods for the world's most vulnerable populations.

### 🌱 Environmental Stewardship

Protecting biodiversity, soil health, and water resources as the foundation of long-term food security.

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