



Base Acres Should Be Addressed Before Reference Prices

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The most common refrain from crop producers and agricultural stakeholders during the current Farm Bill listening sessions is the need to increase reference prices to reflect changes in input costs for row crops over the past five years. Reference prices will be an important factor in Farm Bill negotiations. However, base acres need to be addressed before any reference price changes, and the corresponding payment implications analyzed. Base acres are the delivery mechanism for row crop Title I payments (ARC and PLC). Changing reference prices without fixing base acres is akin to building a house on a broken foundation, imperfections would be amplified not diminished. While it is essential for commodity program payments to be decoupled from planted acres, base acres should be reflective of production changes over time.

First, it is important to distinguish between a base acre update and a base acre reallocation. A base acre update would potentially add or subtract base acres by examining previous planted acres (5-year average or some other time period). This would increase or decrease the number of base acres on a farm based on the number of acres, on average, planted to a covered commodity. A base acre reallocation would hold total base acres on a farm constant but proportionately reallocate base acres to the commodities planted over the determined time interval. Whether a base acre update or reallocation is being considered is an important distinction.

Two major obstacles exist for any base acre update:

- 1) Distinct commodity winners and losers (**Table 1**)
 - 2) Disproportionate impact across geographic regions (**Table 2**)
- The tables below summarize base acres, enrolled base acres, and FSA planted and prevented planted acres by commodity and by state.*

Definitions:

Base acres: A farm's crop-specific acreage of wheat, feed grains, rice, oilseeds, pulse crops, or peanuts eligible used for FSA program purposes. Base acres do not necessarily align with current plantings.

Enrolled base acres: Base acres that annually participate in the Agricultural Risk Coverage Program or the Price Loss Coverage Program.

FSA Planted and Prevented Planted Acres: Producers are required to self-report all cropland on each farm to FSA annually. Data are reported in the following categories: planted; prevented planted; and failed.

Table 1. United States five-year average planted and prevented planted acres, enrolled base acres, and base acres by commodity.

COMMODITY	FSA 5-Yr AVG (2018-2022) Planted and Prevented	2023 Enrolled Base Acres	2021 Base Acres	FSA 5-Yr AVG (2018-2022) Planted and Prevented - 2021 Base Acres	5-Yr AVG (2018-2022) Planted and Prevented - Enrolled Base	% More (or Less) Base than Planted
BARLEY	2,637,089	5,341,352	6,229,295	-3,592,205	-2,704,263	136%
LARGE CHICKPEAS	367,728	71,733	87,350	280,377	295,994	-76%
SMALL CHICKPEAS	92,934	20,906	22,521	70,413	72,028	-76%
CANOLA	2,127,271	1,447,182	1,485,935	641,335	680,089	-30%
CORN	92,407,439	92,629,304	100,741,093	-8,333,654	-221,864	9%
CRAMBE	-	2,788	2,884			
PEAS	982,280	430,802	452,977	529,304	551,478	-54%
FLAX	299,332	225,994	232,964	66,368	73,338	-22%
SORGHUM	5,737,562	8,496,074	9,830,784	-4,093,223	-2,758,512	71%
LENTILS	627,166	279,245	289,663	337,503	347,921	-54%
MUSTARD	120,668	24,570	25,465	95,204	96,098	-79%
OATS	2,162,597	2,052,588	2,665,810	-503,214	110,009	23%
PEANUTS	1,503,945	2,435,864	2,597,689	-1,093,744	-931,919	73%
RAPESEED	8,531	2,380	2,515	6,016	6,151	-71%
RICE - LONG GRAIN	2,273,357	3,819,732	4,191,682	-1,918,325	-1,546,375	84%
RICE - MEDIUM GRAIN	445,913	164,787	175,659	270,253	281,125	-61%
RICE - TEMPORATE JAPONICA	326,852	259,281	641,114	-314,263	67,571	96%
SAFFLOWER	156,759	72,273	113,088	43,671	84,486	-28%
SEED COTTON-UPLAND	10,804,105	8,261,786	13,862,460	-3,058,355	2,542,318	28%
SESAME	117,903	5,515	6,297	111,606	112,388	-95%
SOYBEANS	85,054,527	52,607,173	55,838,513	29,216,013	32,447,354	-34%
SUNFLOWERS	1,507,494	1,612,953	1,676,708	-169,214	-105,460	11%
WHEAT	47,484,573	61,844,110	69,724,293	-22,239,720	-14,359,537	47%
UNASSIGNED GENERIC BASE	0	0	3,193,687	-3,193,687	0	
TOTAL	257,246,024	242,108,394	274,090,447	-16,844,423	15,137,630	7%

Table 2. Enrolled base, base, and five-year average FSA planted and prevented planted acres by state.

	2023 Enrolled	2021 Base	FSA 5-Yr AVG 2018-2022	5-Yr AVG - Base	5-Yr AVG - Enrolled
Alabama	1,155,406	1,690,370	1,337,854	-352,516	182,448
Alaska	13,560	19,500	7,507	-11,993	-6,053
Arizona	421,493	700,956	376,038	-324,918	-45,454
Arkansas	6,223,455	6,971,170	6,408,866	-562,304	185,411
California	1,205,676	3,727,268	1,475,292	-2,251,976	269,616
Colorado	4,786,342	5,433,588	4,000,271	-1,433,317	-786,071
Connecticut	22,212	35,289	23,623	-11,666	1,412
Delaware	340,825	394,920	382,178	-12,742	41,353
Florida	298,309	462,242	370,807	-91,435	72,498
Georgia	2,377,129	3,353,718	2,690,718	-663,000	313,590
Hawaii	0	0	1	1	1
Idaho	2,727,891	3,103,917	2,269,015	-834,902	-458,876
Illinois	20,859,567	21,683,354	22,069,424	386,070	1,209,857
Indiana	10,550,390	11,259,225	11,462,561	203,336	912,170
Iowa	21,065,158	22,543,890	22,919,711	375,821	1,854,553
Kansas	20,836,441	21,866,755	21,077,590	-789,165	241,149
Kentucky	2,890,576	3,203,052	3,724,710	521,658	834,134
Louisiana	2,409,329	3,153,695	2,538,669	-615,027	129,340
Maine	72,217	94,123	66,741	-27,382	-5,476
Maryland	971,059	1,091,942	1,078,741	-13,200	107,683
Massachusetts	11,744	26,186	16,094	-10,091	4,350
Michigan	4,233,704	4,986,348	4,980,185	-6,163	746,482
Minnesota	16,457,186	17,241,813	17,390,225	148,412	933,039
Mississippi	2,989,346	3,901,475	3,751,255	-150,220	761,910
Missouri	9,350,948	10,056,791	10,493,712	436,921	1,142,764
Montana	9,477,491	10,403,593	7,857,278	-2,546,315	-1,620,213
Nebraska	15,800,755	16,425,836	16,607,280	181,444	806,526
Nevada	41,541	53,886	26,755	-27,131	-14,786
New Hampshire	12,483	17,892	12,201	-5,691	-282
New Jersey	144,656	203,293	190,573	-12,719	45,918
New Mexico	877,490	1,161,214	737,024	-424,190	-140,466
New York	1,198,985	1,519,648	1,481,118	-38,530	282,132
North Carolina	3,050,149	3,639,372	3,593,725	-45,647	543,576
North Dakota	20,357,462	21,227,272	21,075,904	-151,368	718,442
Ohio	7,980,876	8,644,859	8,898,564	253,705	917,688
Oklahoma	7,385,139	9,034,731	7,767,913	-1,266,818	382,773
Oregon	1,039,046	1,483,154	877,941	-605,212	-161,104
Pennsylvania	1,104,067	1,492,471	1,664,685	172,214	560,618
Rhode Island	1,082	1,757	1,736	-20	655
South Carolina	1,114,924	1,507,198	1,191,979	-315,220	77,055
South Dakota	13,601,461	14,079,556	13,998,616	-80,940	397,155
Tennessee	2,440,566	2,944,804	3,125,020	180,217	684,455
Texas	13,878,687	20,910,575	16,039,481	-4,871,094	2,160,794
Utah	342,394	460,107	221,640	-238,467	-120,754
Vermont	78,177	102,938	88,574	-14,364	10,398
Virginia	1,094,683	1,383,104	1,308,157	-74,947	213,474
Washington	3,302,194	3,914,096	2,774,268	-1,139,828	-527,926
West Virginia	73,291	103,381	77,682	-25,700	4,391
Wisconsin	4,985,663	5,742,415	6,408,798	666,384	1,423,135
Wyoming	455,173	631,708	307,451	-324,257	-147,722
Total	242,108,394	274,090,447	257,246,024	-16,844,423	15,137,630