

# Little Changes In Land Use According To ERS Data

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Major land use has changed little over the last couple of decades, according to the Economic Research Service (ERS), however their most recent data was collected in 2002.

The United States has a land area of about 2.3 billion acres, which can be categorized as:

- Rural (2.2 billion acres, or 97 percent) includes agricultural (range, cropland, pasture, farmsteads, and roads), forest, and other land.
- Urban (60 million acres; 3 percent) includes residential, commercial, utilities, mixed, transitional, and other urban land.

Major uses of land in 2002 were:

- Cropland, 442 million acres (20 percent of the land area)
- Grassland pasture and range, 587 million acres (26 percent)
- Forest-use land (total forest land exclusive of forested areas in parks and other special

uses), 651 million acres (19 percent)

- Special uses (parks, wilderness, wildlife, and related uses), 297 million acres (13 percent)
- Urban land, 60 million acres (3 percent)
- Miscellaneous other land (deserts, wetlands, and barren land), 228 million acres (10 percent).

The largest acreage change from 1997 to 2002 was a 13-million-acre decrease in cropland (-3 percent), ERS reports. "This continues a long downward trend from 1978, when cropland totaled 470 million acres, an overall 6-percent drop. Total cropland area in 2002 was at 442 million acres, its lowest point since in 1945, but only 2 million acres (less than 1 percent) below the previous low in 1964. Cropland has been relatively constant from 1945 to 1997, ranging between 442 and 471 million acres and averaging about 463 million acres. Δ

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