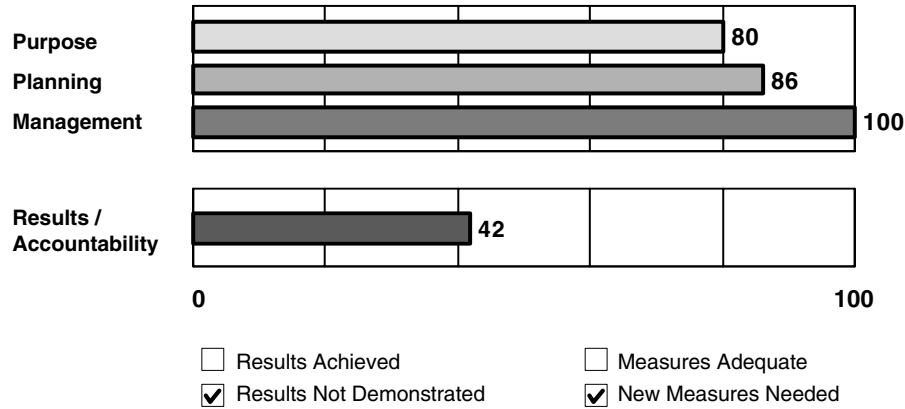


Program: Farmland Protection Program

Agency: Department of Agriculture

Bureau: Natural Resources Conservation Service



Key Performance Measures

Year Target Actual

Measure	Year	Target	Actual
Long-term Measure: Measure under development			
Annual Measure: 1.2 million acres of conservation easements on agricultural land by 2007	2001	34,000	34,900
	2002	100,503	
	2003	201,005	
	2004	251,256	
Efficiency Measure: Measure under development			

Rating: Results Not Demonstrated

Program Type: Competitive Grants

Program Summary:

The Farmland Protection Program (FPP) protects farm and ranch land from development by providing matching funds to states, local governments, and non-governmental organizations to purchase conservation easements. Grants can also be used to purchase easements to protect historical or archaeological resources. The 2002 farm bill provided FPP annual mandatory funding, increasing from \$50 million in 2002 to \$112 million in 2004.

Overall, the program is administered in an effective manner. The program prioritizes applications at the state level and selects the best projects for protecting important agricultural lands from development. The program does not, however, have outcome-based annual or long-term performance measures. Thus, the program cannot demonstrate it is delivering results. In addition, independent and quality reviews of FPP had not yet been conducted.

The review supports a number of recommendations. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) promulgated revised regulations for FPP in the late summer and, based upon the findings of the PART, the Administration added language to the rule to strengthen the program's design. Specifically, the program will now require an analysis of a particular project's strategic contribution towards conservation of agricultural land and influence on urban development in a geographic area. In the past, USDA did not specifically consider how a given project worked with other land protection efforts or how a single project integrates within a conservation strategic plan.

Other recommendations based on the assessment include:

1. The Department has contracted with outside research groups, such as American Farmland Trust and several universities, to develop improved performance measures that are outcome based. The results of these studies are due in early 2003.
2. The Administration recommends increasing NRCS's discretionary appropriation in 2004 to design and implement an evaluation system that will provide outcome performance indicators for farm conservation programs, such as FPP.

Program Funding Level (in millions of dollars)

<u>2002 Actual</u>	<u>2003 Estimate</u>	<u>2004 Estimate</u>
50	85	112