

## Conversions to Cropland

FSA defines conversions to cropland (sometimes called “land broken out” or “new breakings”) as land on the farm that was not in the prior year classified as “cropland.” “Cropland” includes land that is currently being cropped and land that was cropped at some time in the past and is still capable of being cropped. For example, woodland that is cut down and converted to a cultivated field would be captured as “new land broken out.” The demolition of an old farmhouse and the incorporation of that land into the surrounding cultivated field would also qualify as “new land broken out.” Conversely, land moving from cropland to noncropland could, for example, occur when a cultivated field is converted to a commercial building complex at the edge of a town.

Several qualifications are important. If a parcel of land has already been classified by FSA as “cropland,” FSA data on conversions to cropland do not reflect new field crop plantings on that land—even though it may not have been cropped for a long time, such as certain hay or pastureland. In addition, the FSA data do not reflect conversion from cropland back to grassland, since FSA considers this land to have been shown capable of being cropped. Note that the FSA data do not capture “native sod” conversion in a strict sense. More generally, the FSA data encompass conversion of ANY non-cropland to cropland—which could include tearing down a business on the edge of a small town and using it for agricultural cultivation.

As additional background, Title I-enrolled producers (other than those participating in dairy and sugar) must annually report land use of all of the cropland on their participating farms to their local FSA office. The acreage that is classified as cropland is recorded in the FSA automated system at the tract level. A “tract” is a unit of contiguous land under one ownership, which is operated as a farm or part of a farm. Starting in 2012, a reason code was added to the automated tract record for “new land broken out.” Note that

the FSA data do not capture all conversions, as not all producers participate in a Title I program. For more information on FSA's exact definition of cropland and other related information, see the Farm, Tract, and Crop Data Handbook at: [http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA\\_File/3-cm\\_r04\\_a23.pdf](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/3-cm_r04_a23.pdf).