Dramatic changes have taken place in American farming during the last few decades. Our nation is moving from an era of abundance of farm products to one of scarcity. Americans are becoming concerned about our continuing ability to produce enough food for domestic and foreign markets and about the impact of modern farming on the quality of the environment.

To decide whether public funds should be spent to combat erosion, information is needed on the effect of soil erosion on food and fiber production and the social cost of resultant pollution. Better methods are needed to monitor changes in soil qualities, land use, and management; to quantify the effect of such changes on productivity; to assess the impact of changing economic conditions on the resource base; to document the Nation’s ultimate capability to produce food; and to identify alternatives of agricultural production. These assessments must be accurate, relevant, cost effective, and in a suitable format for public and private decision makers. This document identifies research needed to achieve these objectives.