Consistent with the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977, current USDA policy is that conservation tillage (CT) is the "leading cost-effective practice" for soil erosion control (USDA, 1982). The goal is adoption of CT systems in nearly all 182 major land resource areas (MLRA) in the USA (USDA, 1981). Other recent actions, such as establishment of a Conservation Tillage Information Center by the National Association of Conservation Districts, reinforced the USDA decision. These actions and associated farmer enthusiasm recognize that much CT technology is available, but they also challenge public and private workers in research and extension to provide new technology.

A study by the Office of Technology Assessment (1982) indicated many perceived and real barriers to adoption, including: problems of pest control, especially weeds; unfavorable soil drainage and associated low soil temperature; poor information about the benefits of soil erosion control; and management difficulties. The mix of real and perceived barriers indicates much confusion about existing and undeveloped technology to make CT function in all areas of the USA. Perhaps this confusion should not be unexpected because CT will bring about a major technological change in agriculture.