

PA in Balance:

Innovative strategies for development of the ag conservation workforce through establishment of a statewide training center

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Funding Opportunities

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

USDA NRCS Programs
USDA FSA CRP, CREP
Chesapeake Bay Program Funding
PENNVEST NPS Ag Projects
DEP Growing Greener
EPA 319 Program
REAP
NFWF Grants (INSR, SWG)

DCNR Riparian Buffer Program

2019 PA Farm Bill:
Conservation Excellence Grants
REAP increased to \$13 million

DEP CAP Block Grants

EPA Most Effective Basin Funding

PA Clean Streams Fund
Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act
Partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities
Inflation Reduction Act

Current Funding Opportunities: Historic Investments in Pennsylvania Agriculture and Clean Water

RCPP

Growing Greener

IIJA

EQIP

ACEP

NFWF INSR

CBRAP

CEG

CSP

REAP

CWPP

CBIG

NFWF SWG

IRA

MEB

SRF

CAP

ACAP

DCNR Buffer Program

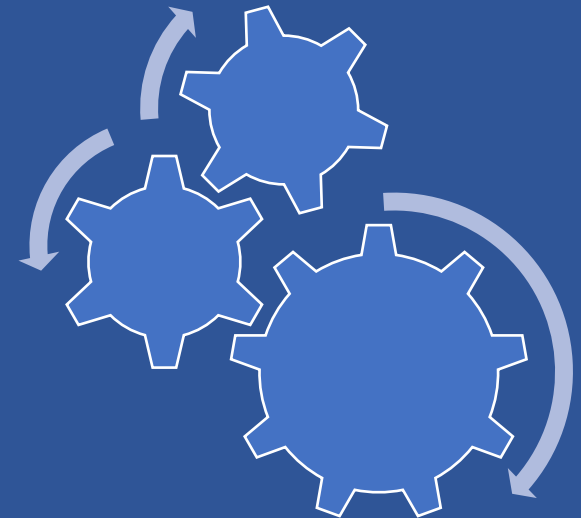


319

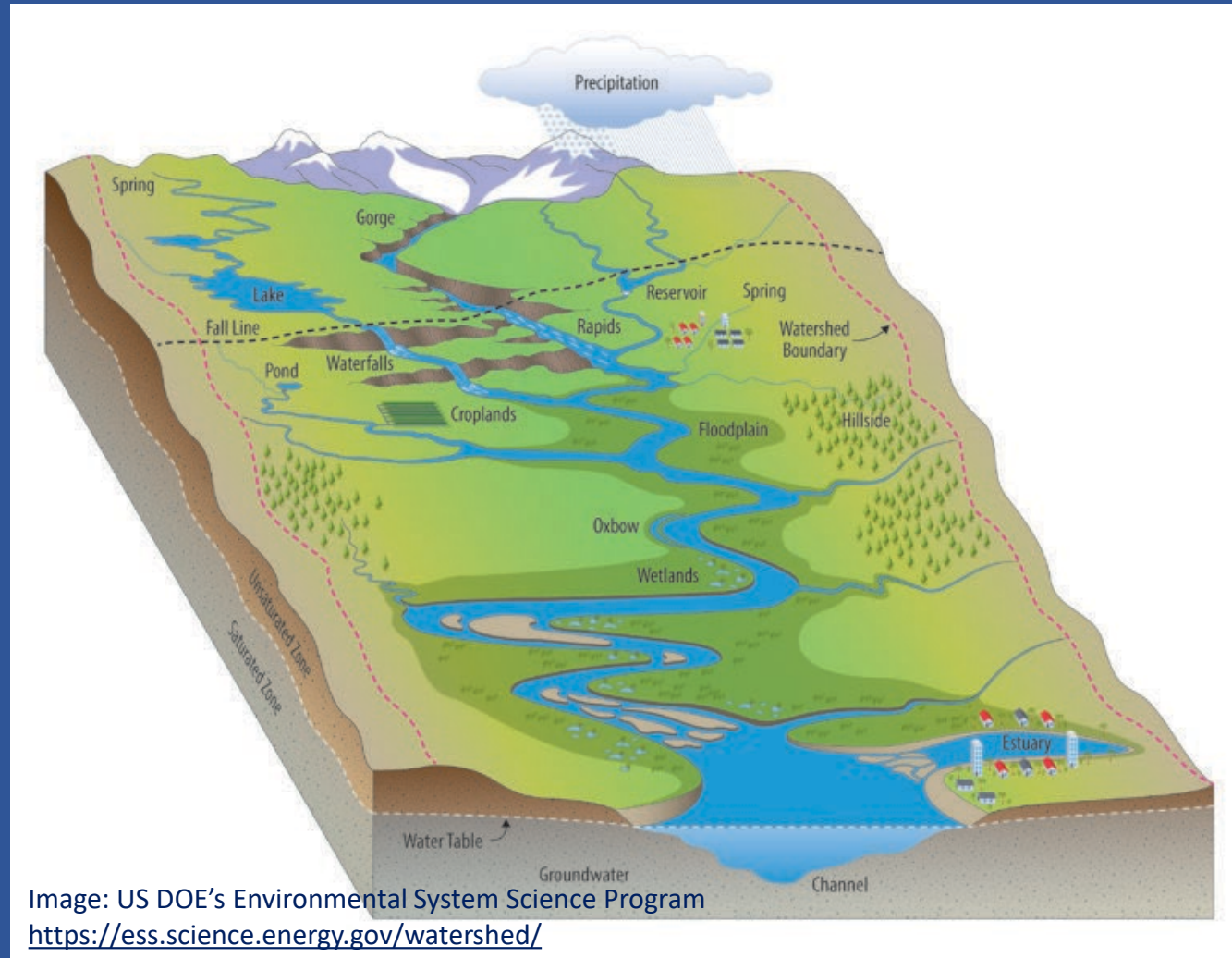
PA in Balance 2022: What was our charge?

- Consider a systems approach
- What is a system?
 - A set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network.

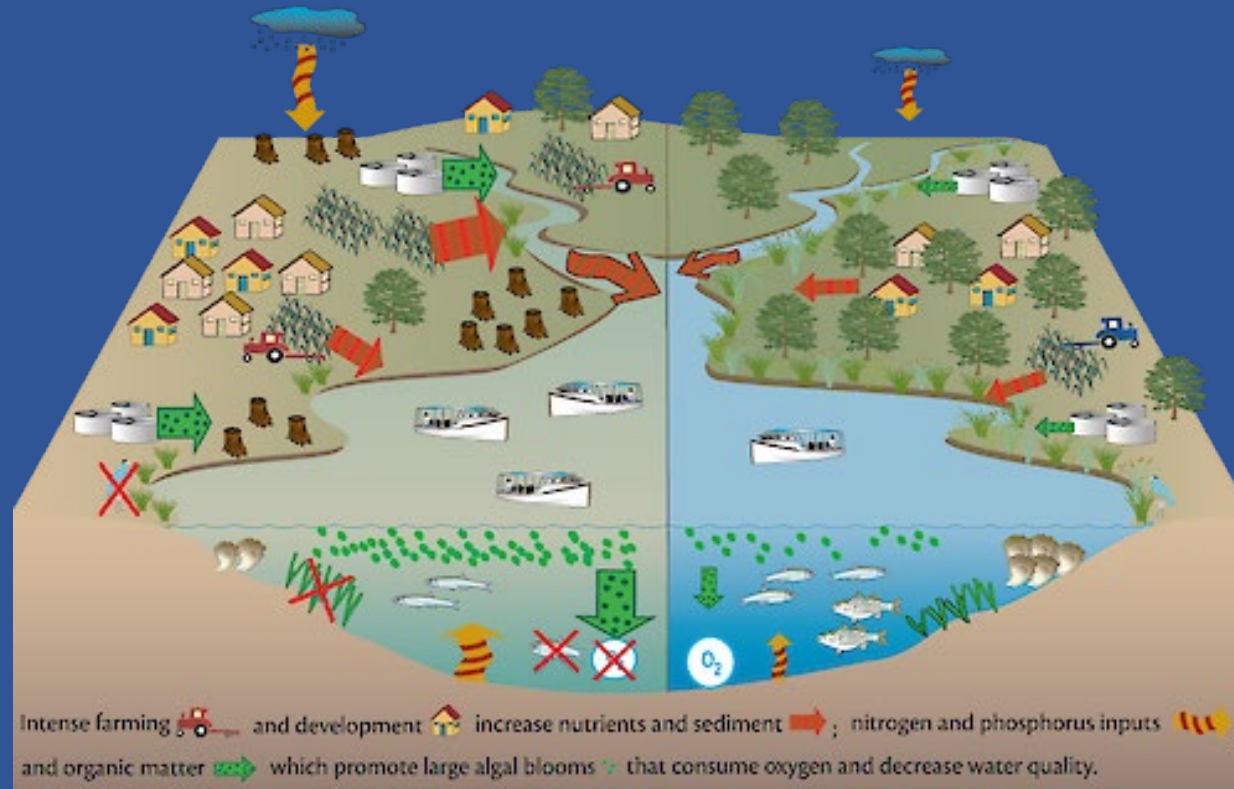
–Oxford Dictionary



PA in Balance 2022: Our Watersheds as Systems



PA in Balance 2022: The Chesapeake Bay as a System



Present Conditions

Desired Conditions

Diagram courtesy of the Integration and Application Network (ian.umces.edu), University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. Source: Lane, H., J.L. Woerner, W.C. Dennison, C. Neil, C. Wilson, M. Elliott, M. Shively, J. Graine, and R. Jeavons. 2007. Defending our National Treasure: Department of Defense Chesapeake Bay Restoration Partnership 1998-2004. Integration and Application Network, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Cambridge, MD.

PA in Balance 2022: The Farm as a System

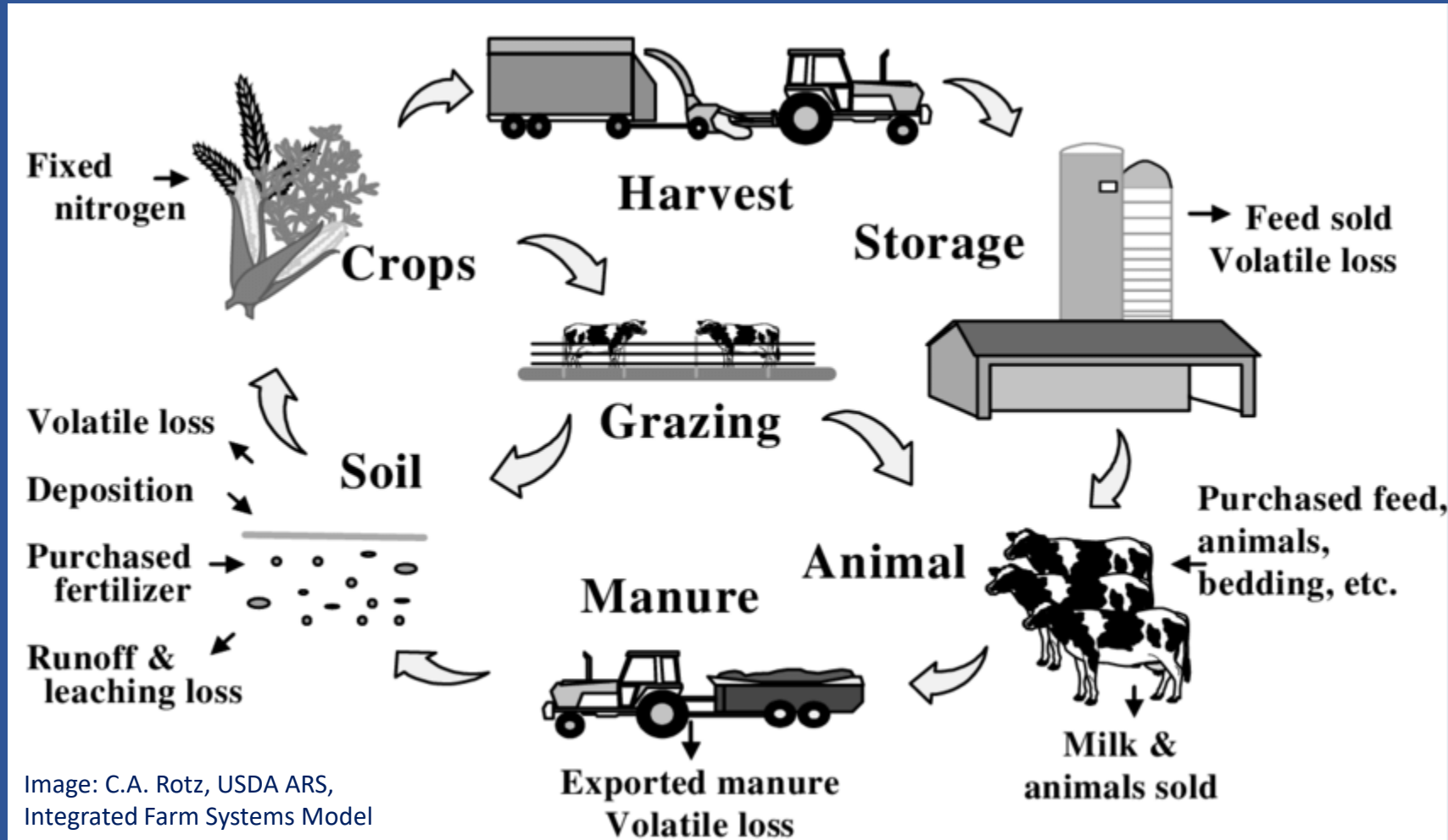


Image: C.A. Rotz, USDA ARS,
Integrated Farm Systems Model

PA in Balance 2022: The Agricultural Economy as a System

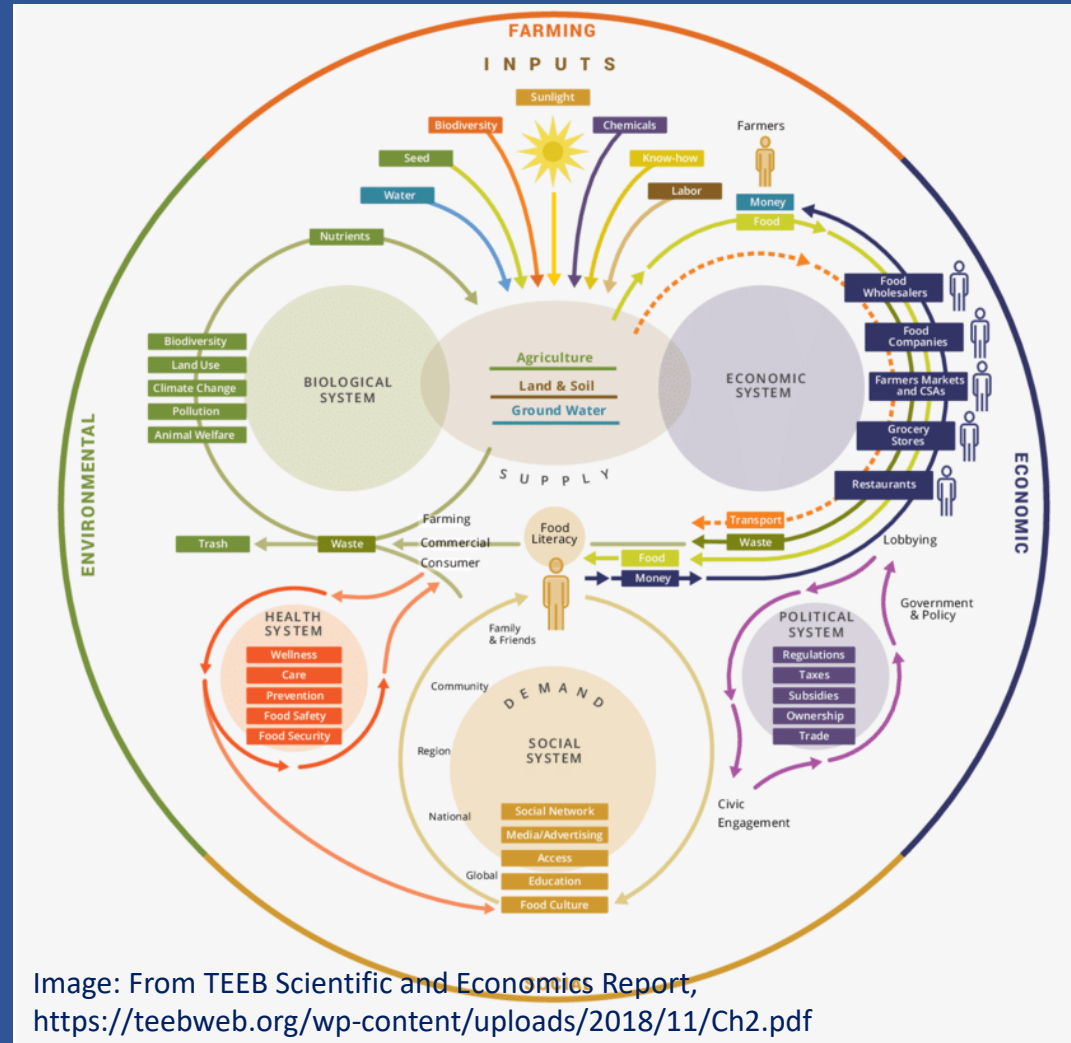
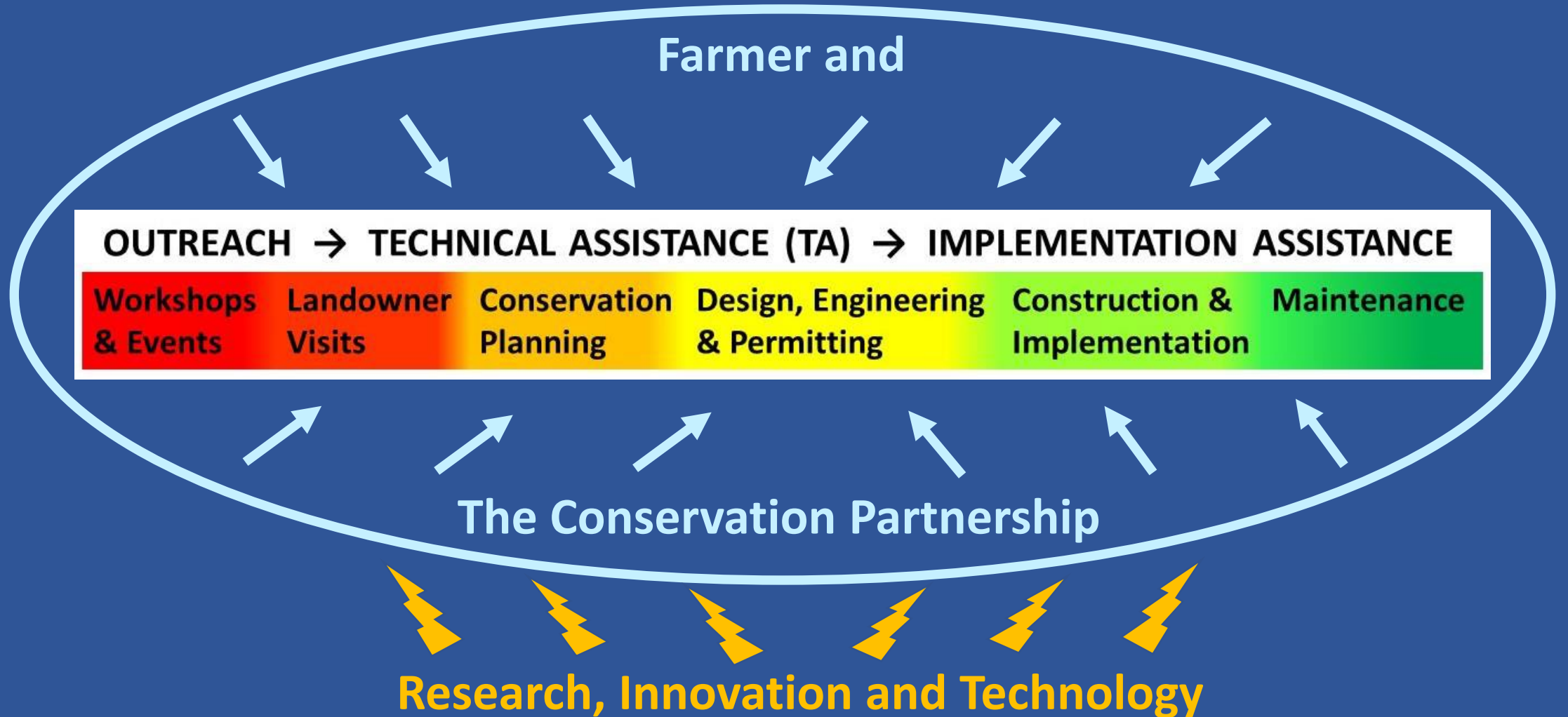
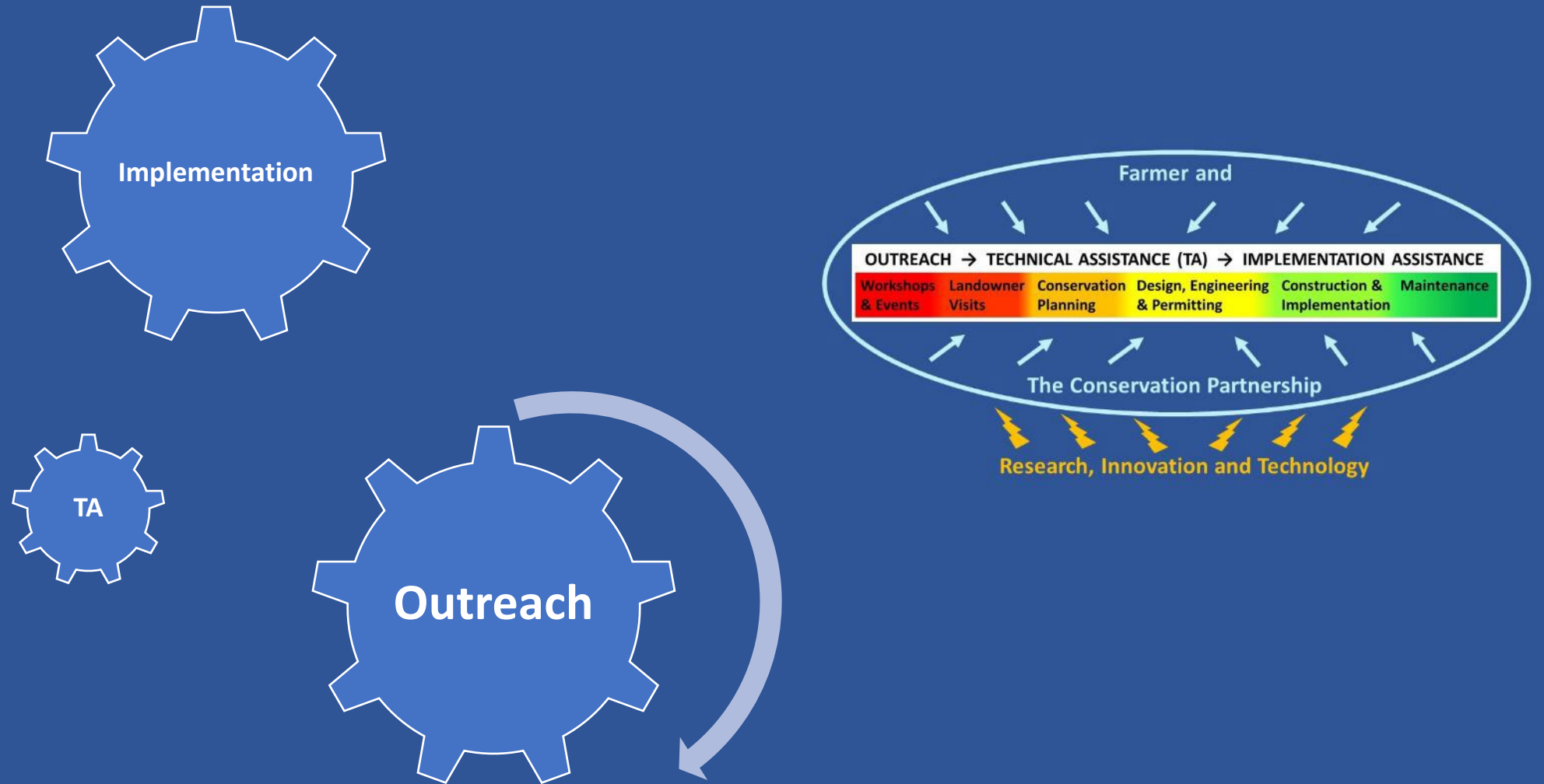


Image: From TEEB Scientific and Economics Report,
<https://teebweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Ch2.pdf>

PA in Balance 2022: Ag Conservation Delivery as a System



A Broken System: Ensuring Adequate TA Capacity



PA in Balance 2022: December 12-14, Lancaster, PA

- Over 120 attendees
- Exploring innovations in developing highly functional systems to accelerate efficient, effective, and high impact conservation implementation on Pennsylvania farms



PA in Balance 2022: Summary Recommendations

1. **Streamlining**

Streamline the conservation funding delivery system.

2. **Workforce Development**

Invest in workforce development and training to position Pennsylvania as the innovation hub for agricultural and natural resources conservation.

3. **Local Coordination**

Support local partnership and implementation coordination to ensure resources are deployed efficiently and tailored to local needs.

4. **Engage Corporations**

Extend the agricultural and conservation partnership network to businesses and corporations.

5. **Climate-Smart Commodities**

Position Pennsylvania partnerships for climate-smart commodities as centers for innovation and market development.

Since PA in Balance 2022: Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training at Penn State Extension

- Conversations began July 2022, upon passage of PA Clean Streams Fund
- A partnership of Penn State College of Ag Sciences, PA State Conservation Commission, and PA Office of USDA NRCS
- Proposed to be funded through the PA Clean Streams Fund and the new Ag Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP)
- Increase capacity to deliver conservation training of existing workforce
- Recruit and train tomorrow's conservation professionals

Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training: Enhanced Workforce Training Capacity

- Extension Educators working alongside NRCS to increase capacity and frequency of Conservation Boot Camps (starting fall 2023)
- NRCS retirement cadre
- Offer similar boot camps for NGO and private sector
- New skills-specific, topical trainings
- Virtual and in-person presence

Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training: Enhanced Engineering Capacity

- NRCS Engineer devoted to the Center for NRCS and NRCS/ACAP funded projects
- RFP for professional engineering services for ACAP projects; develop program of observed competence

Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training: On the Job Training/Outreach/Technical Support

- Center staff provide technician assistance, project design, farmer outreach where needed in specific counties and regions
- On the job training where conservation district staff turnover is frequent

Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training: Education and Workforce Recruitment

- Career fairs and ag conservation job/internship recruitment
- Faculty position within Dept. Ag & Biological Engineering
- New courses in ag engineering
- Enhance marketing of Ag Stewardship and Conservation Certificate
- Expand experiential learning opportunities through AEC internship program, working with conservation partners



Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training: Next Steps

- Proposed scope of work and budget being presented at State Conservation Commission meeting May 9
- Partners continue to meet regularly to shape the Center
- Offer summer training series; fall conservation boot camp
- Fill positions!
- Questions? Contact Jennifer Fetter, Interim Director, at jrf21@psu.edu