



Protecting Our Environment

How Plants Help Remove Carbon From The Air

(NAPSA)—Scientists believe that by helping plants store carbon in the soil we can begin to control global warming. The process is called carbon sequestration. Here are some facts about the problem, and the solution:

- Many crop land soils in the U.S. have lost as much as half of their original organic carbon content due to the effects of land clearing and tillage. As a consequence, nearly one-fifth of the continental U.S. (458 million acres) is capable of storing about one-fourth of the 7.4 billion metric tons of carbon that fossil fuel combustion emits into the air, every year.

- Because agriculture and forestry practices can help plants store carbon in the soil faster than they emit it into the atmosphere, they are the only major sectors of the U.S. economy able to sequester carbon without engineering means of separating it from power generation wastestreams.

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that all the forests in the United States, combined, removed a net of approximately 281 million metric tons of carbon per year from 1952 to 1992, thereby offsetting approximately 25 percent of U.S. emissions of carbon during that period.

- The total carbon sequestration potential of U.S. crop land is



SCIENTISTS SAY that we now know how to help plants store carbon in the soil faster than they emit into the atmosphere.

estimated to be between 75 million and 200 million metric tons of carbon per year. U.S. grazing land can sequester 30-90 million metric tons. Together with forest lands, that's 133 percent of the total emission of greenhouse gases by agriculture and forestry activities.

- "Best management practices" such as conservation tillage lead to increased quantities of organic carbon in soils. Their widespread practice would allow U.S. crop and grazing lands to store 12 to 14 percent of U.S. carbon emissions every year.

More information about carbon sequestration is available at www.co2andclimate.org.