

Agriculture During the Reagan Years

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ABSTRACT

The Farm Crisis of the 1980s is the most significant agricultural economic downturn since the Great Depression. To date, no scholarly research has examined the Reagan administration's approach to the crisis. This study is an attempt to fill that void.

Reagan was interested in reducing the size and cost of the federal government. Agriculture was an area that he targeted for that quest. His administration presented proposals for two comprehensive farm laws that included plans for reducing government involvement in price supports, set-aside programs, and government loans to agriculture. His ultimate goal was a free market without any governmental intrusion.

This plan was not well received by Congress, farmers, and agricultural lobbyists. Major conflict ensued. Ultimately political reality won the day and the Reagan administration gained very little ground toward its goal of less government in agriculture.