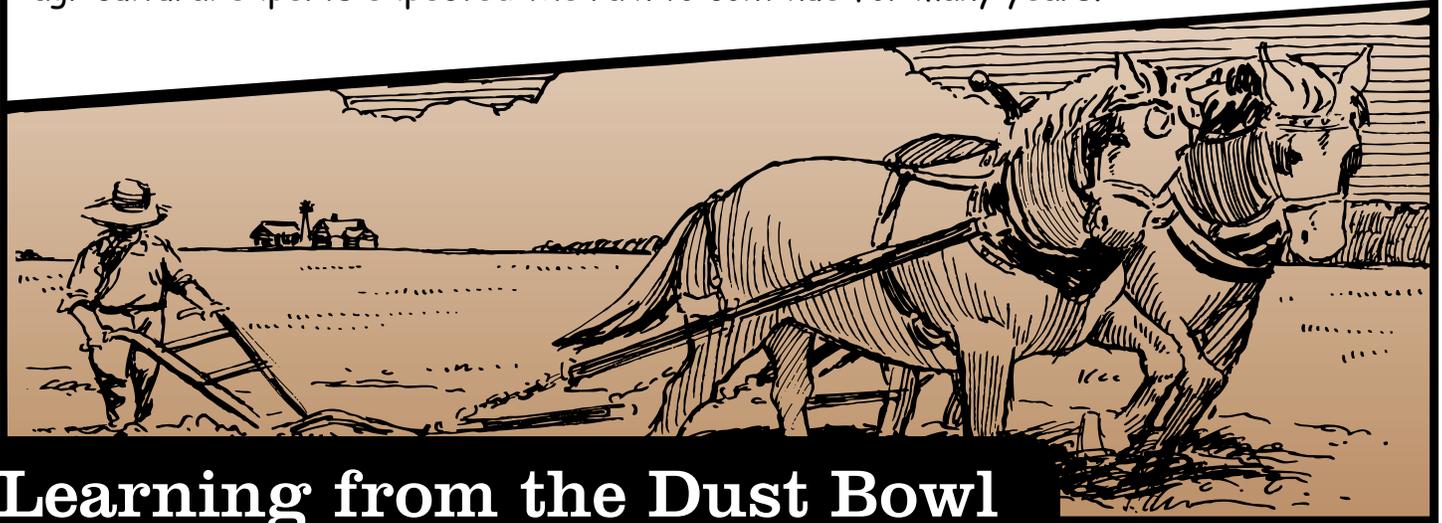
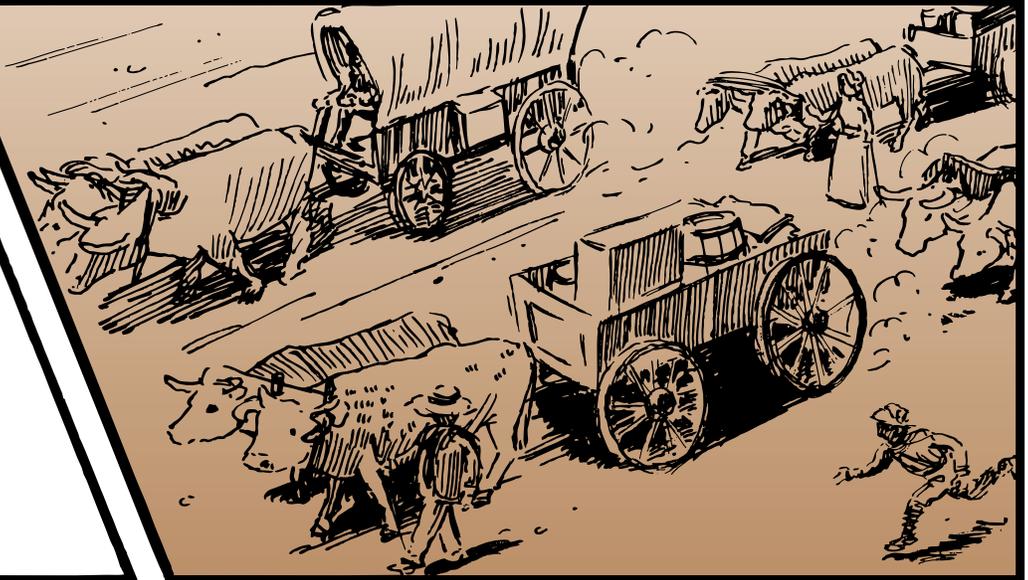


During the late 1800s, an unusual amount of rain fell on the Great Plains. Farmers and agricultural experts expected the rain to continue for many years.



Learning from the Dust Bowl

The moist, productive soil encouraged people to settle in the Great Plains and begin farming. As demand for wheat increased, farmers increased their profits by cultivating more and more land.



Mechanized equipment allowed for more efficient farming over an ever-expanding area. Farmers practiced "deep plowing" that removed native grasses in the fields before they began planting. This left the soil barren for months until the next planting.

When the weather was wet, deep plowing worked well. However, in 1930 an extended drought began and crops failed. The dry soil was over-plowed into fine particles that were easily blown away by the near-constant winds.



High winds carried massive amounts of topsoil eastward. Dust was carried all the way to Chicago and eventually Cleveland, Boston, and New York City.

LEARN MORE: Research crop rotation, strip farming, and contour farming.

The cruel lesson of the Dust Bowl is that topsoil is a precious resource that must be protected. Challenges associated with maintaining healthy soils include nutrient depletion, erosion, and water runoff. Different farming practices now address these challenges, like crop rotation, strip farming, and contour farming.

