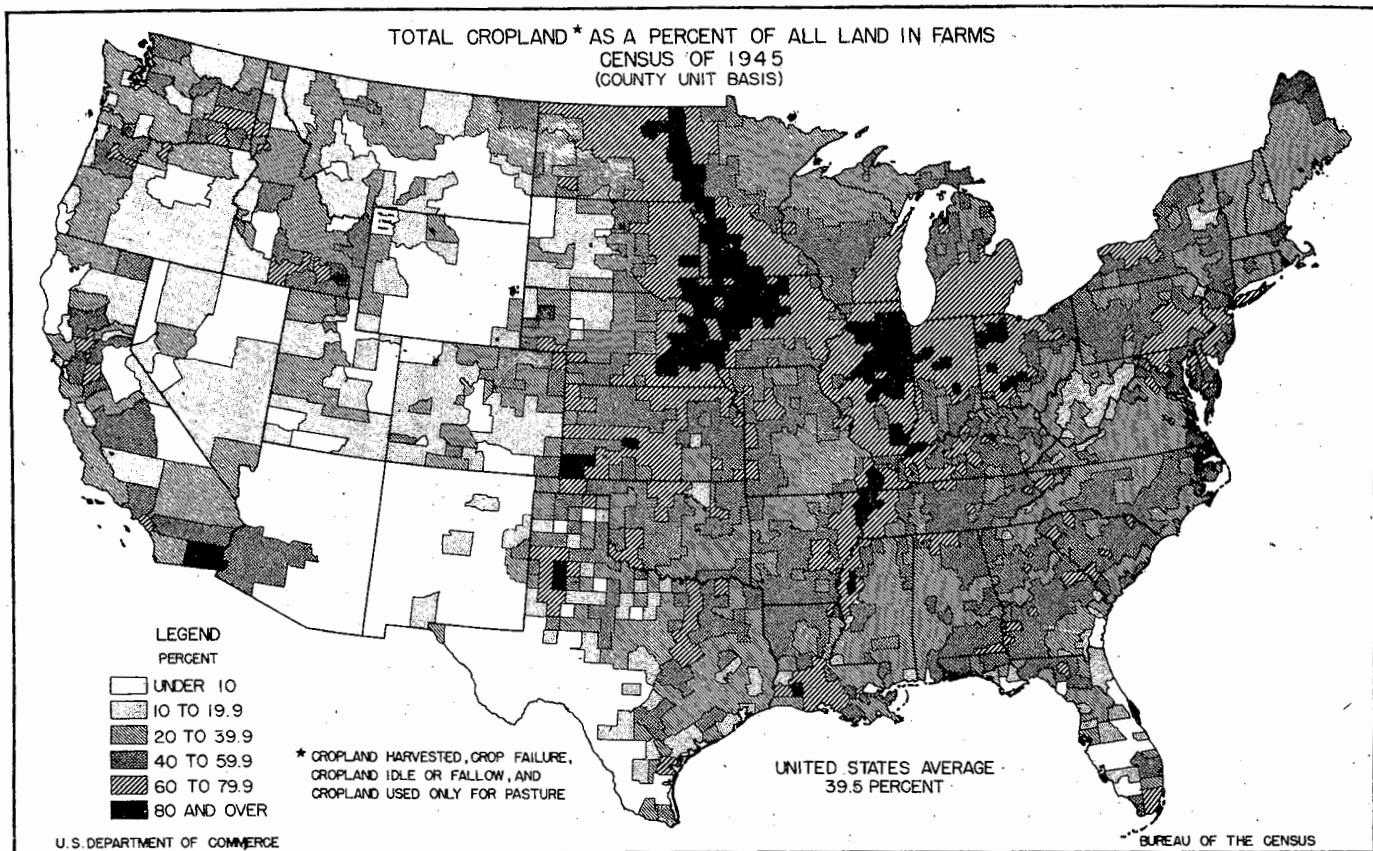


GRAPHIC SUMMARY



CROPLAND UTILIZATION

Over one-half of the Nation's 451 million acres of all cropland in 1944 were located within one-fifth of the land area comprised by the triangular-shaped Central Plains, extending westward from central Ohio and expanding into the northern and southern Great Plains. The concentration of cropland within this mid-continental area, the granary of the United States, reflected an advantageous combination of physical factors—favorable climate, productive soil, and smooth surface of the land. Mechanization of farm operations has been favored by these conditions. Cropland concentration in this area has increased considerably in recent years.

The relative proportion of cropland was high throughout the farming centers of this general area. As much as 85 percent or more of the area of individual counties on the level, productive land in east central Illinois was classified as cropland and four-fifths was actually used for crops. This preponderance of cropland decreased in central and western Wisconsin and central Minnesota where a larger proportion of the farm land was utilized for pasture for dairy herds. The proportion of the farm area classified as cropland was also lower in southern Iowa and northern Missouri where the erosion hazard has been recognized by shifting a large acreage of former cropland to pasture. Cropland concentration was localized rather than widespread in the adjoining areas to the north, east, and south represented by the cut-over land of the upper Lake States, the hills of eastern and southern Ohio and southern Indiana and the Ozarks of southern Missouri. Wheat and other farm crops in the western Great Plains were confined to such favorably situated localities as the smoother and broader interstream divides and the irrigated valleys. The distribution of cropland was enlarged by the cutting of native grasses for hay in areas such as the sand hills of Nebraska.

Cropland concentration was not so extensive in the eastern and southern part of the United States because of the more pronounced local variations in soils, slopes, drainage, and other physical conditions. Concentrations of cropland are evident in areas such as the Piedmont and valley areas of Pennsylvania and Maryland, lowlands adjacent to Lake Ontario in northwestern New York, the Delta and adjoining uplands in western Tennessee, northwestern Mississippi, and eastern Arkansas, the coastal prairies of southern Louisiana, and the black prairies of Texas. The incidence of cropland within the valleys and basins of Kentucky and Tennessee contrasts with the small and localized acreage within the adjoining highlands. Cropland west of the Continental Divide was concentrated within the irrigated valleys, the Palouse country of the outer Columbia Basin, the dry-farming areas of Idaho and Utah, the central and coastal valleys of California and the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

The acreage losses through crop failure in 1944 and during the other war years were lower than at any time since the predrought years about 1920. The distribution of the 10 million acres of crop failure in 1944 evidenced the local rather than general prevalence of adversities such as floods, a wet spring, and drought, storm, disease and insect destruction later in the season. Acreage losses from floods were greatest along the Red, the Minnesota, and the Upper Missouri Rivers, in southern Nebraska, and in northern and western Kansas. Drought, storms, black rust, and insect ravages resulted in additional losses in a number of areas.

About one-half of the 40 million acres of idle or fallow cropland in 1944 were located within the spring-wheat areas of Montana and the Dakotas; the winter-wheat areas of Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado; and other nonirrigated farming areas of the 17 Western and Plains States where alternate summer fallow is practiced as a moisture-saving and -storing measure. It also included the cropland customarily lying idle or being rested under soil, slope, and rainfall conditions prevailing throughout much of the area from the Virginia Piedmont to eastern Texas. Land in this category also included fields unplanted because of floods and prolonged wetness—particularly on the river bottoms in Minnesota—unseasonable spring and early summer weather elsewhere, and individual shortages of labor or equipment.

The 48 million acres of cropland used only for pasture in 1944 represented land pastured during the year which, although not used for crops in that year, had been plowed sometime during the 7 years preceding 1945. The principal concentrations included the crop-pasture land on the limestone soils of the Appalachian valleys and basins, the rice fallow land in southern Louisiana and southeastern Texas, the rotation pastures of the Corn and Dairy Belts and the irrigated valleys.

The 367 thousand farms with 200 acres or more of cropland harvested in 1944 were concentrated on the productive and level to rolling land of the Central Plains. These units actually exceeded in number all other farms in the two Dakotas. Moderately large crop farms with from 50 to 199 acres of cropland harvested were concentrated in the Corn Belt and Lake States, and in the eastern portion of the Plains States. Together these two classes included only one-third of the total number of farms in the United States but contained four-fifths of the cropland harvested.

Farms with from 10 to 49 acres of cropland harvested were distributed throughout the eastern humid areas exclusive of the Central Plains and within the irrigated valleys of the West. They were especially numerous where hand labor requirements were high, such as in the tobacco-and cotton-farming areas. Farms with 1 to 9 acres of cropland harvested were concentrated within the mountain valleys in eastern Kentucky, western North Carolina, and eastern Tennessee. They were numerous around population centers from lower New England to the Pacific Coast. The location of these farms with small acreages of cropland also evidenced intensive crop specialization, off-farm employment, and lack of equipment.