

INTRODUCTION

Since 1925, Censuses of Agriculture taken at 5-year intervals have provided information on the major uses of land in farms. The former Bureau of Agricultural Economics and the Production Economics Research Branch, Agricultural Research Service have compiled data at different times on the uses of land not in farms. Graphic presentation of the basic information about land use has accompanied the collection and tabulation of the basic statistics for each of the Censuses of Agriculture since 1925.

Numerous uses are made of the graphic presentation of available statistics and other information on the utilization of land. Facts relating to the present extent, location, and productivity of land used for different purposes are needed in the analysis of present and prospective agricultural or general economic conditions for the country as a whole and for specific areas. Future requirements for land resources need to be compared with present uses in order to determine the best possibilities for meeting the long-term demands for food and fiber required by an expanding population with a desire for an improved level of living. Alternative means of increasing production when the occasion arises will need to take account of possible shifts in land use that may be needed to provide more of some kinds of commodities and less of others as overall patterns of consumption change.

Current problems in the surplus production of some agricultural commodities are related in part to the need for certain basic shifts in land use. In order to approach an effective solution to this problem, a thorough understanding of how the land is presently used is a necessary starting point. Historical perspective is also required in order to arrive at satisfactory solutions to such problems of agriculture as the present overproduction of certain crops.

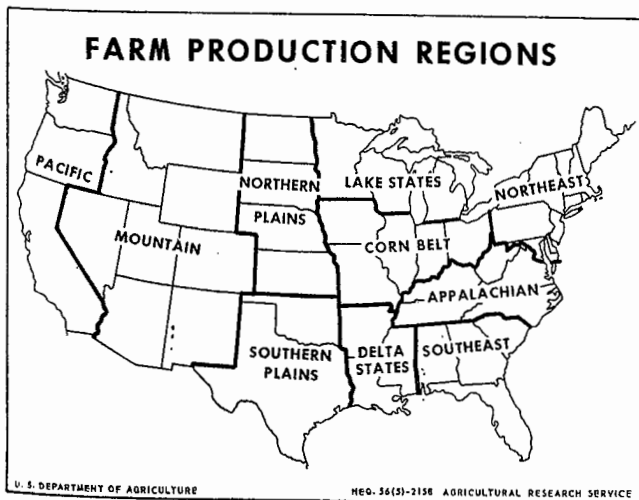
Competitive demands for the use of land have attracted considerable attention in recent years. Widely divergent opinions are expressed about the need to deal with such problems as the subdivision of good farmland for urban development, the need for recreational space near large concentrations of population, and the relationship between the improvement of farmland through drainage and the need to maintain adequate habitats for wildlife. If these and conflicts in use are to be resolved, a good basic knowledge of how the land is presently being used will be needed.

Sources of data.—The maps and charts pertaining to land in farms presented in this graphic summary are based principally on statistical data published in reports of the 1954 Census of Agriculture and in reports of earlier Censuses. Agricultural

Research Service, Production Economics Research Branch, in the United States Department of Agriculture, has collected, integrated, and analyzed data on land not in farms and has related this information to Census statistics for land in farms. This information has been gathered from the records and reports of State and Federal agencies. These records of public land-owning and land-managing agencies, branches of State governments, and other sources were consulted in the preparation of an inventory of major land uses by the Production Economics Research Branch, Agricultural Research Service. Aerial photographs, topographic and other maps, soil surveys, and related materials provided information necessary for the preparation of some of the maps. The Soil Conservation Service supplied information on land clearing and brush control in soil conservation districts for which technical assistance was provided. The Agricultural Conservation Program Service provided county data necessary for preparing maps on farm drainage and the seeding and reseeding of pasture.

Scope, definitions, and explanations.—The graphic summary of land utilization focuses attention on the major uses of land. Attention is given to land not in farms as well as to land in farms. Maps and charts showing present distribution and past changes for the major land uses are included along with a brief explanatory text. This report is not concerned primarily with the distribution of crops and livestock and with changes in the production of individual commodities. However, a selected number of maps and charts dealing with some of the principal crops and with the main livestock classes are presented to facilitate the use and interpretation of maps and charts on major land uses. Care has been exercised in the selection of illustrations in order to include the most significant changes taking place as well as the present distribution of different land uses.

In the maps, charts, and text, terminology consistent with the various definitions contained in the 1950 Census of Agriculture is used. In describing and locating areas, commonly accepted geographical terms are used. In presenting data by States, farm-production regions or divisions are used in order to obtain more agriculturally related combinations of States than the geographic divisions used by the Census. This division permits the presentation of significant regional differences in land use which are obscured in Census data. Unless otherwise stated, the farm-production regions are used throughout this graphic summary. In order to avoid confusion, the comparative grouping of Census geographic divisions and farm-production regions is shown by the accompanying two maps.



MAP OF THE UNITED STATES, SHOWING GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS AND DIVISIONS

