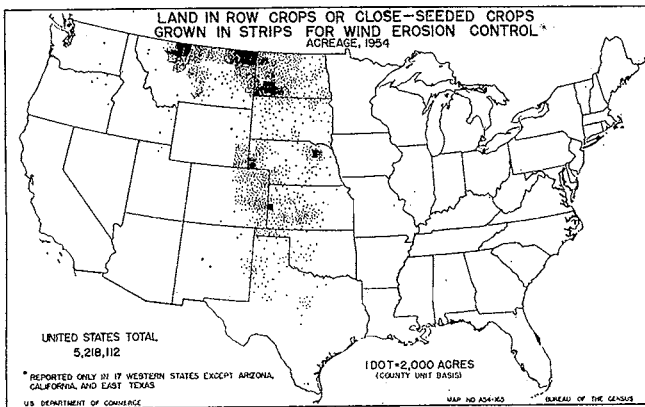


SOIL-CONSERVING PRACTICES



For the first time, the Census of Agriculture obtained information in 1954 pertaining to the conservation of land resources. Since the passage of the first National Soil Conservation Act by Congress in 1935, greatly increased attention has been focused on the conservation of land resources throughout the United States. In 1937, States began to pass laws which permitted farmers and ranchers to organize soil-conservation districts for the purpose of carrying out needed soil-conservation measures. The United States Soil Conservation Service has worked in close cooperation with these districts.

All States had laws by 1948 which made it possible to organize soil-conservation districts. By the end of 1955, the number of soil-conservation districts totaled 2,677. Most of these districts are about the size of a county, and many of them have boundaries that coincide with county boundaries. By the end of 1955, basic conservation plans had been prepared for more than a million farms and ranches in these soil-conservation districts. The land area of these farms and ranches for which basic conservation plans have been prepared totaled more than 298 million acres at the end of 1955.

Conservation practices have not yet been established on much of the land for which plans have been prepared because of the short time that has elapsed since the plans were completed. However, much work is in progress, and each year several million acres are receiving the benefit of soil and water conservation practices. The job ahead still remains a big one. Even when all farms and ranches have completed conservation plans, the job of carrying out these plans on a permanent basis lies ahead.

Land in cover crops turned under for green manure.—A cover crop is grown in a thick stand as a means of enriching and protecting soil resources. Some cover crops are plowed under while still green which provides green manure. Organic matter and plant food are added in this way. Some cover crops are perennials; and since they occupy the land for a period of years are thought of as a permanent cover crop. Annual crops grown for their cover value are generally planted either in the fall or in spring and early summer.