

WHEAT PRODUCERS AND WHEAT PRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

American wheat producers represent an important and distinct segment of our agricultural economy. Nearly a million of the 4.8 million farmers in the United States produce some wheat. Some wheat is grown in all States (see fig. 1), and in 1954, it occupied 51.4 million acres or 15.4 percent of the cropland harvested. Its relative importance in various areas is shown by the proportion of cropland occupied by wheat (see fig. 2). Total wheat production has approximated 1 billion bushels or more in each of the last 15 years with a peak production of 1,359 million bushels in 1947. The 1954 crop of 909 million bushels had a farm value of \$1,940 million. This was approximately 8 percent of gross farm sales in the United States.

Two-thirds of the wheat is grown on relatively specialized farms on which wheat is the major product. These farms are particularly affected by changes in weather conditions and in economic programs that affect wheat. Operators of cash-grain farms harvesting wheat used 34 million acres of cropland or 10.7 percent of the United States total, in the production of wheat in 1954. They had invested \$25.7 billion in land, buildings, livestock, and machinery, or about 23 percent of the total capital investment in agriculture. These wheat farmers used 13 percent of the total agricultural labor force.

In addition, many other farmers with diversified types of farming use a part of their resources to produce some wheat.

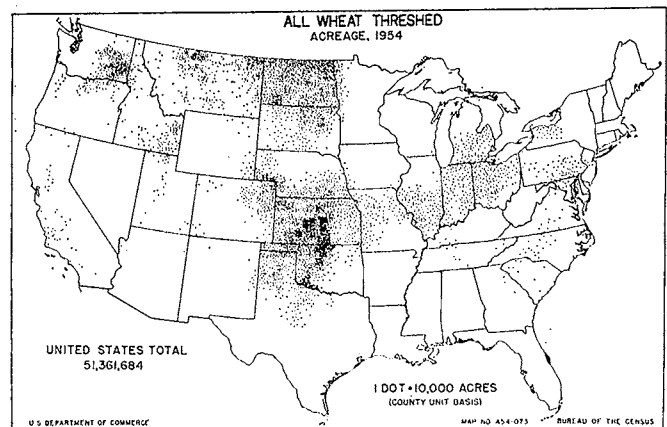


FIGURE 1.

Public interest in wheat producers is stimulated by the demand-supply situation in wheat and the difficulties of making necessary adjustments. The major concern in agricultural programs and price policy for wheat growers for more than 30 years has been the problem of adjusting the quantity produced to the quantity consumed (see fig. 3).

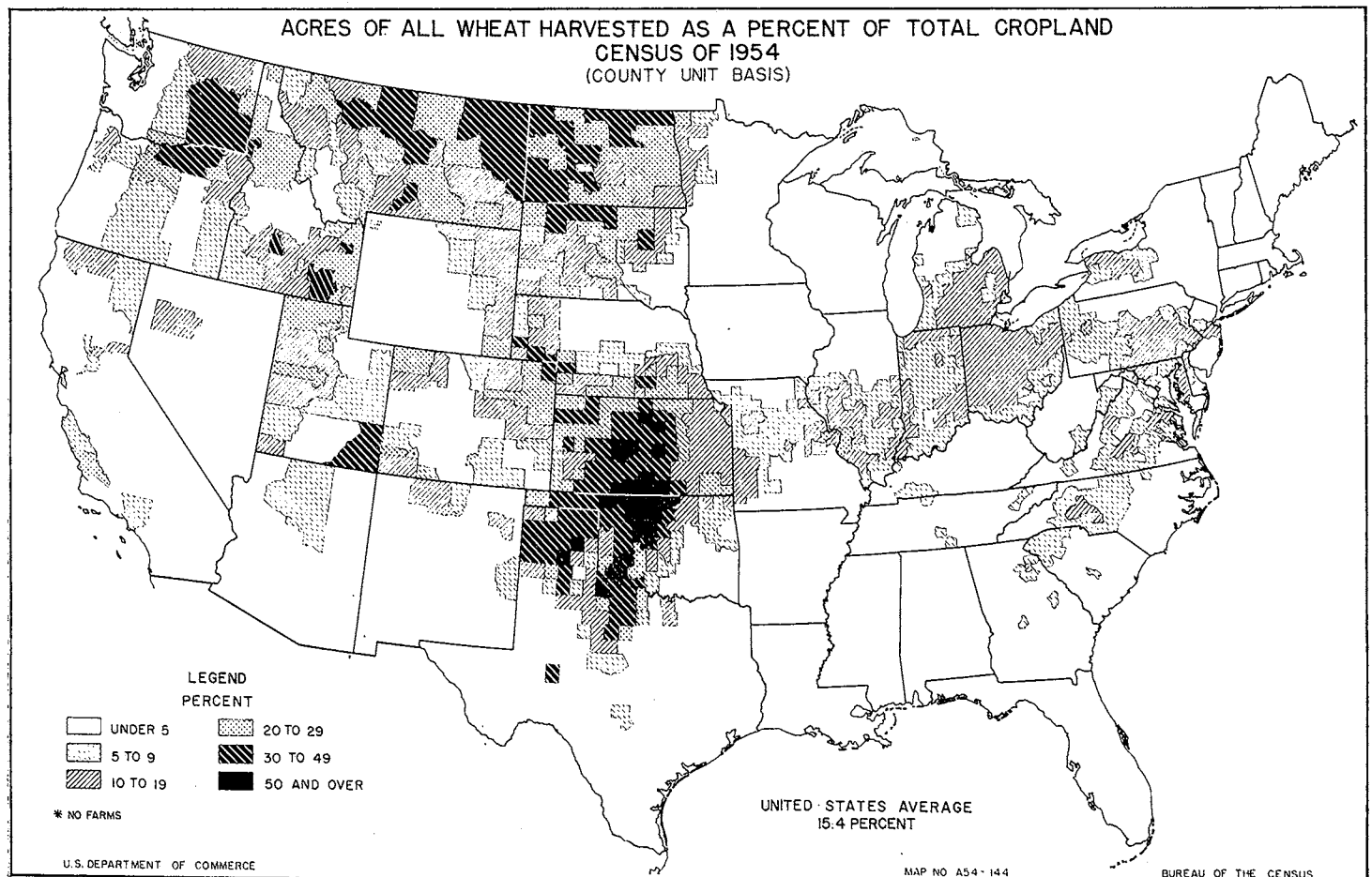


FIGURE 2.