

TYPES AND VARIETIES OF PEANUTS

Three separate types of peanuts are recognized in the commercial channels of trade—the Virginia type, the Spanish, and the Runner. The Virginia-type peanut is grown mainly in the Virginia-North Carolina region. These peanuts are relatively large, with two or three kernels in a pod. The kernels are relatively long and flat and are covered with a pinkish skin. The Virginia-type supplies most of the peanuts sold in the shell and most of the large salted kernels.

The Spanish-type is the most widely distributed variety in the country. Heaviest production is in Georgia, Texas, Alabama, and Florida. The plant is upright in growth and is harvested easily as the pods are closely centered near the surface of the ground. The pods are small and the kernels are small and round. This type is used by peanut-butter manufacturers, candy makers, and nut salters. The oil content is higher in Spanish peanuts than in either Runner or Virginia.

The Runner peanut is grown commercially in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia. It has a spreading rather than a bunch form of growth. The pod is of medium size but more nearly resembles the Spanish than the Virginia type of pod. In general the yield of Runner is somewhat higher than the yield of Spanish peanuts. Because of this and their widespread adaptability to the soil and climate conditions of the Southeast they are now grown in that region to a much greater extent than in the past. Although they were originally grown for "hogging off" ("hogging off" is the practice of turning the hogs into peanut fields to eat the nuts) or crushing, increasing quantities are being used in the manufacture of peanut butter and to some extent in peanut candy.

MAJOR PRODUCING REGIONS³

Both suitable soil and favorable climate are essential to the commercial production of peanuts. They require a moderately long growing period of 4 to 5 months, with a steady rather high temperature. They need a moderate, uniformly distributed, supply of moisture, especially during the period when the peanuts are forming, followed by dry conditions during harvesting and curing.

Peanuts will grow in nearly all parts of the South, but the differences in suitability of the various soils is very wide. On some soils good yields can be obtained without difficulty, but on others the yields are low even though good production practices are followed. They are usually grown on light-textured soils. Soils that are stony, very gravelly, shallow, wet, very fine, or heavily textured, are generally not used for peanuts. Neither are extremely acid, limy, or salty soils. Deep sands, although they are sometimes used for the crop, are not well suited to it.

Climatic conditions suitable for peanuts are found from southern Virginia southward along the Atlantic seaboard and in the Gulf coast region westward to southern California. But, much of this region contains soils and areas that are unsuitable for the crop. Most of the commercial production is concentrated in three distinct regions.

Virginia-North Carolina region.—This is the oldest peanut-producing region. It is composed of 16 counties located in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. The land is low and mostly level with about 60 percent in farms. The remainder is largely second-growth woods and swamps. The productive farming areas are on the well-drained, light-colored, sandy loams. The dark, heavy soils are generally badly drained and not cropped.

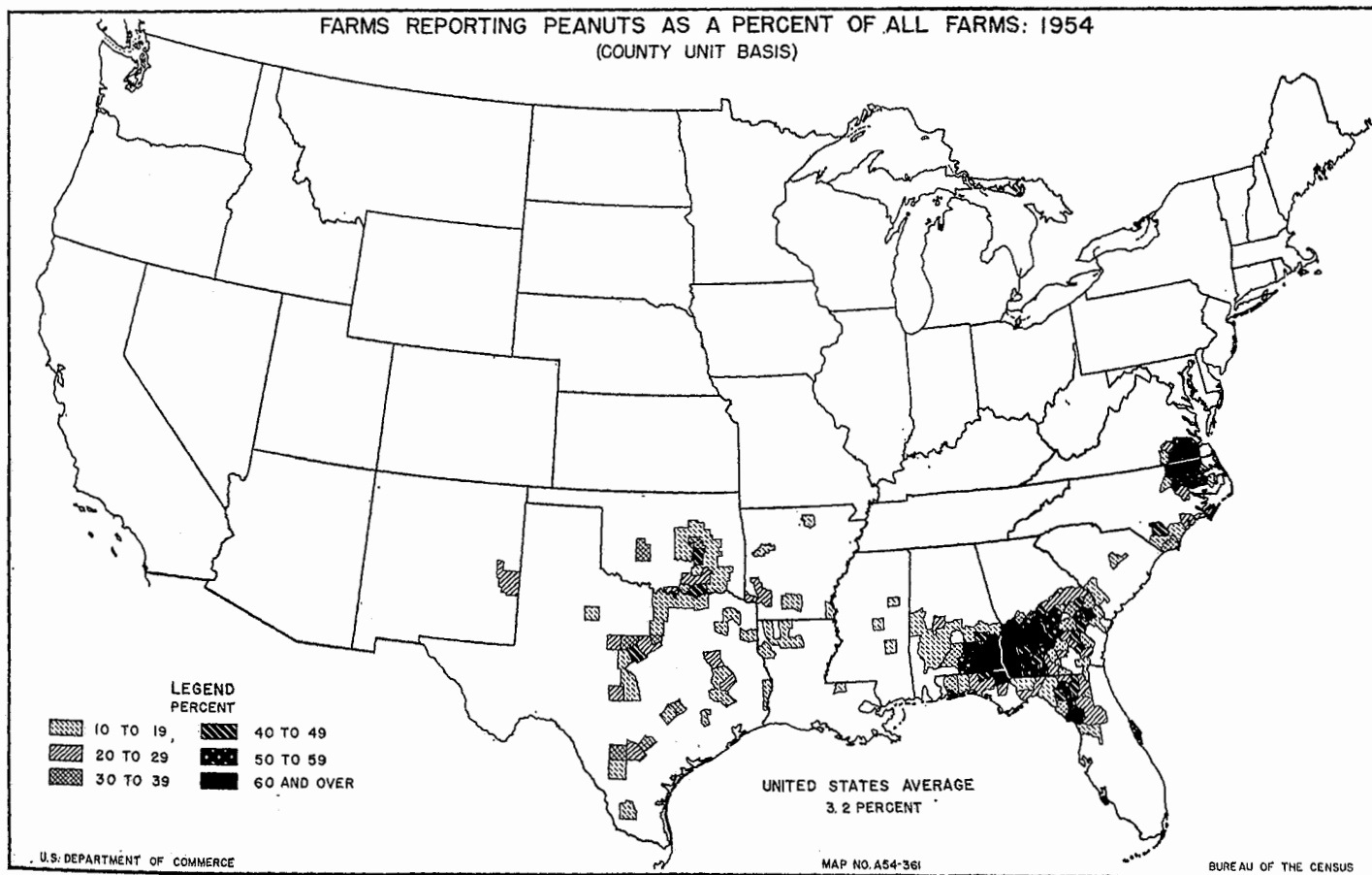


FIGURE 19

³ For a more detailed description of the major producing areas see U. S. Department of Agriculture publications (1) Farmers' Bulletin 2063, "Growing Peanuts" by J. A. Beattie, May 1954, and (2) FM 65 "Peanuts in Southern Agriculture" by K. L. Bachman, G. B. Crowe, and K. V. Goodman, May 1947.