

# CASH-GRAIN AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS IN THE CORN BELT

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## INTRODUCTION

Corn is the leading farm crop in the United States. It is the most widely grown American crop—being produced to some extent in every State. Its total acreage in the United States in 1954 was 78.1 million acres (fig. 1). This was 23.4 percent of the total cropland harvested. Generally, about 85 to 90 percent of the acreage is harvested for grain; the remainder is used for silage or fodder. The average annual production in 1950–56 was 2.8 billion bushels harvested for grain. This is a larger number of bushels than the total production of wheat or any other grain crop. Most of the corn (about 90 percent of the annual crop) is used for livestock feed. In recent years corn has accounted for about 60 percent of the total pounds of concentrates fed to livestock in this country. Other uses of corn are for starch, sirup, sugar, corn meal, grits, alcohol and distilled spirits, breakfast foods, other processed products, and direct consumption in farm households.

The major region of corn production is in the North Central States, centering on Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana. The five States—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri—are generally known as the Corn Belt States. But the boundaries of the principal corn-producing region extend beyond the boundaries of the five-State area, particularly to the north and west. Actually, in recent years Minnesota has outranked Ohio and Missouri in bushels as well as in acreage of corn harvested for grain, and Nebraska has outranked Missouri in five of the last seven years. There has been an expansion of corn production to the north and west during the last two decades.

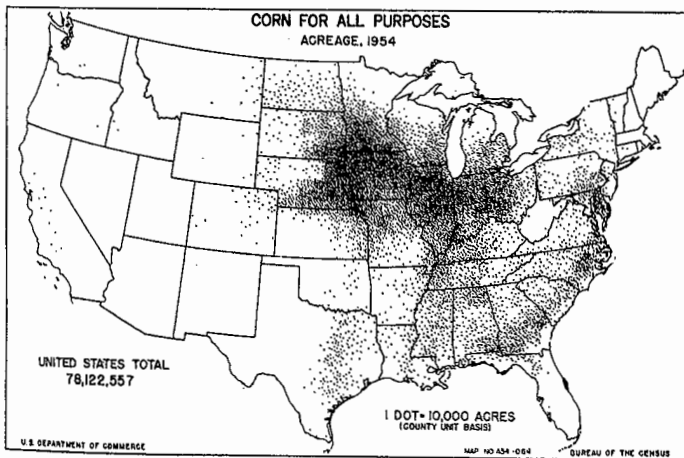


FIGURE 1.

## THE CORN BELT

The area of the Corn Belt as the term is used in the present report was determined by grouping together the economic subregions in which corn production was most concentrated and in which there was a preponderance of cash-grain and livestock types of farms, which are the characteristic types of farms in the Corn Belt.<sup>1</sup> The location and boundaries of the Corn Belt are shown in figure 2.

The Corn Belt, as here outlined, is a somewhat larger region than the five Corn Belt States and coincides rather closely with the Corn Belt as outlined on the map of generalized types of farming in the United States (10).<sup>2</sup> The Corn Belt is bordered on the north by the Lake States dairy region and on the south by the principal region of general farming. It is bordered on the east by dairy and general-farming regions. On the southwest it merges into the winter-wheat region and on the northwest it tapers off into the spring-wheat region.

The Corn Belt includes farming areas in 12 States, but only Iowa is entirely within the area, and only small parts of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Kentucky are included. It stretches across a distance of about 1,000 miles from east to west and approximately 600 miles from south to north.

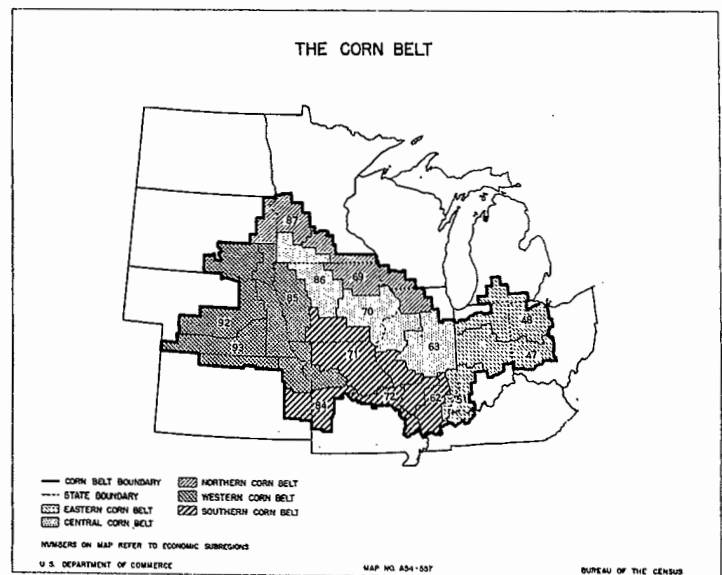


FIGURE 2.

<sup>1</sup> Economic subregions are groups of State economic areas that are generally similar as to economic features reflected in crop and livestock production and types of farming. State economic areas are groups of counties that are relatively homogeneous as to agricultural characteristics. Many of the data obtained in the 1950 Census of Agriculture and in the 1954 Census of Agriculture were grouped and tabulated by State economic areas and by economic subregions.

<sup>2</sup> Italic numbers in parenthesis refer to literature cited on p. 68.