The Corn Belt has fertile soils and a climate that is well suited to corn production. The topography and soils are far from uniform throughout the region. The annual precipitation varies considerably from east to west and to a lesser extent from south to north. There is also a difference from north to south of about 60 days in the length of the frost-free growing season. But the soils in general, and the prevailing moisture, the growing season, and other climatic characteristics are such that the tolerance limits for growth and development of the corn plant are not frequently or seriously exceeded. The natural environment is such that relatively large yields of corn are generally produced and this is generally the crop that brings the highest return to the farmer. Consequently, within the limits imposed by considerations of soil management, disease and insect control, and labor distribution—which are reflected in cropping sequences and crop rotations—corn generally is given the highest priority in choice of cropland by farmers of this region. Among the other principal crops grown in the Corn Belt, soybeans, oats, and forage crops are of major importance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CORN BELT IN AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

A large proportion of the total agricultural production in the United States comes from Corn Belt farms (table 1). In 1954, 28.2 percent of the total value of all farm products sold by commercial farms in the United States was accounted for by the Corn Belt. The value of farm products sold is not as great on a per square mile basis in the Corn Belt as it is in some other areas, but the Corn Belt is the largest area of relatively high value of products sold per unit of land (fig. 3).

Table 1.—Total Quantities of Specified Items for Com-MERCIAL FARMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN THE CORN BELT, Showing Percentage of United States Total in the Corn Belt: 1954

Item	United States	Corn Belt ¹	
		Quantity	Percent of United States
Farms number Land in farms acres Total cropland acres Oropland harvested acres	3, 327, 889 1, 032, 493, 352 431, 584, 954 321, 586, 517	797, 259 170, 307, 389 121, 754, 844 104, 377, 594	24. 0 16. 5 28. 2 32. 5
Value of land and buildings millions of dollars	85, 728	26, 741	31.1
Cash-grain farmsnumber Livestock farms 2number	537, 974 694, 888	264, 546 326, 662	49. 2 47. 0
Corn harvested for grain acres bushels Oats threshed or combined bushels Wheat threshed or combined acres bushels Soybeans harvested for beans acres bushels	1, 301, 894, 795 50, 582, 348 900, 761, 498 16, 189, 376	39, 358, 892 1, 833, 157, 374 19, 343, 798 701, 564, 728 8, 283, 849 209, 310, 547 11, 773, 052 260, 452, 666	62. 1 71. 9 51. 8 53. 9 16. 4 23. 2 72. 7 80. 8
All cattle and calves	54, 963, 546	22, 907, 509 36, 653, 945 110, 368, 868 836, 540, 713 5, 423, 998	25. 8 66. 7 32. 4 31. 4 18. 0
Tractors number Motortrucks number Automobiles number Grain combines number Cornpickers number Pick-up hay balers number Field forage harvesters number	674, 182 431, 944	1, 329, 422 448, 745 912, 208 410, 200 477, 416 149, 025 61, 289	32. 2 20. 2 28. 5 43. 2 70. 8 34. 5 31. 0
Expenditures for hired labor dollars. Expenditures for gasoline and other petroleum fuel and oil dollars. Expenditures for commercial fertilizer dollars.	2, 214, 180, 127 1, 312, 642, 381 1, 023, 734, 322	237, 678, 756 385, 651, 642 259, 212, 808	10. 7 29. 4 25. 3
Value of all farm products solddollars Value of all crops solddollars Value of livestock and livestock products solddollars	24, 298, 622, 950 11, 955, 045, 301 12, 223, 361, 628	6, 857, 668, 641 2, 479, 582, 915 4, 374, 939, 331	28. 2 20. 7 35. 8

¹ The Corn Belt is comprised of the following 15 economic subregions: 47, 48, 51, 62, 63, 69, 70, 71, 72, 84, 85, 86, 87, 92, and 93.

² Livestock other than dairy and poultry farms.

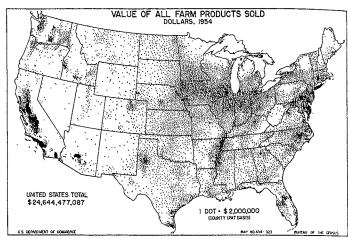


FIGURE 3.

The concentration of value of crops sold in the Corn Belt is not as great as the concentration of value of livestock and livestock products sold (figs. 4 and 5) because most of the cropland is used for growing feed crops and most of the feed produced is fed to livestock in the region. Commercial farms in the Corn Belt had 66.7 percent of all the hogs and pigs and 25.8 percent of all the cattle and calves on commercial farms in the United States in 1954 (table 1).

Approximately two-thirds of the acreage of corn harvested for grain on commercial farms in the United States in 1954 was in the Corn Belt and the production on this acreage was 71.9 percent of all the corn produced on commercial farms in the Nation. Corn Belt farms also had 72.7 percent of the total acreage of soybeans

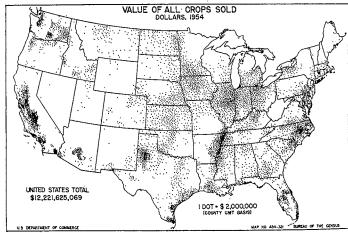


FIGURE 4.

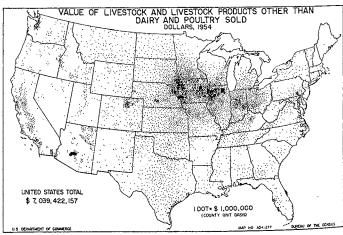


FIGURE 5.