

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 COMMERCIAL 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.....	3,327,889	797,259	24.0
Land in farms.....acres.....	1,032,493,362	170,307,389	16.5
Total cropland.....acres.....	431,584,954	121,754,844	28.2
Cropland harvested.....acres.....	321,586,517	104,377,594	32.5
Value of land and buildings millions of dollars.....	85,728	26,741	31.1
Cash-grain farms.....number.....	537,974	264,546	49.2
Livestock farms ²number.....	694,888	326,662	47.0
Corn harvested for grain.....acres.....	63,394,112	39,358,802	62.1
bushels.....	2,547,823,454	1,833,157,374	71.9
Oats threshed or combined.....acres.....	37,312,820	19,343,798	51.8
bushels.....	1,301,864,795	701,564,728	53.9
Wheat threshed or combined.....acres.....	60,582,348	8,283,849	16.4
bushels.....	900,761,498	209,310,547	23.2
Soybeans harvested for beans.....acres.....	16,189,376	11,773,052	72.7
bushels.....	322,324,503	260,452,666	80.8
All cattle and calves.....number.....	88,843,964	22,907,509	25.8
All hogs and pigs.....number.....	54,963,546	36,653,945	66.7
Chickens 4 months old and over.....number.....	340,361,825	119,368,868	32.4
Chicken eggs sold.....dozens.....	2,663,617,214	836,540,713	31.4
All sheep.....number.....	30,176,438	5,423,998	18.0
Tractors.....number.....	4,127,764	1,329,422	32.2
Motortrucks.....number.....	2,223,443	448,745	20.2
Automobiles.....number.....	3,199,713	912,208	28.5
Grain combines.....number.....	950,341	410,200	43.2
Cornpickers.....number.....	674,182	477,416	70.8
Pick-up hay balers.....number.....	431,044	149,025	34.5
Field forage harvesters.....number.....	197,628	61,289	31.0
Expenditures for hired labor.....dollars.....	2,214,180,127	237,678,756	10.7
Expenditures for gasoline and other petroleum fuel and oil.....dollars.....	1,312,642,381	385,651,642	29.4
Expenditures for commercial fertilizer.....dollars.....	1,023,734,322	259,212,808	25.3
Value of all farm products sold.....dollars.....	24,298,622,950	6,867,668,641	28.2
Value of all crops sold.....dollars.....	11,955,045,301	2,470,582,915	20.7
Value of livestock and livestock products sold.....dollars.....	12,223,361,628	4,374,939,331	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.

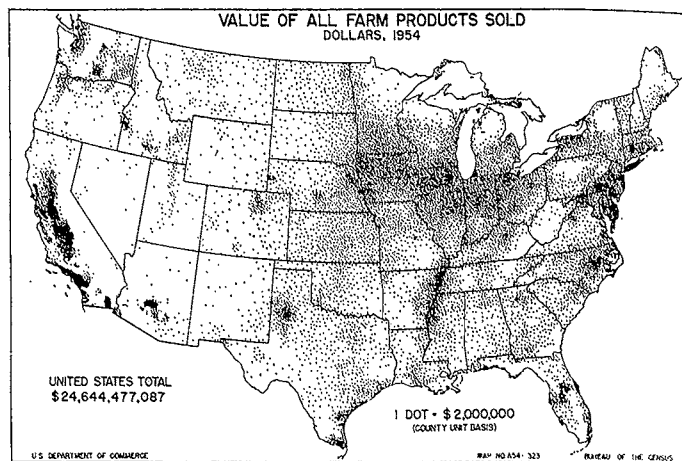


FIGURE 3.

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

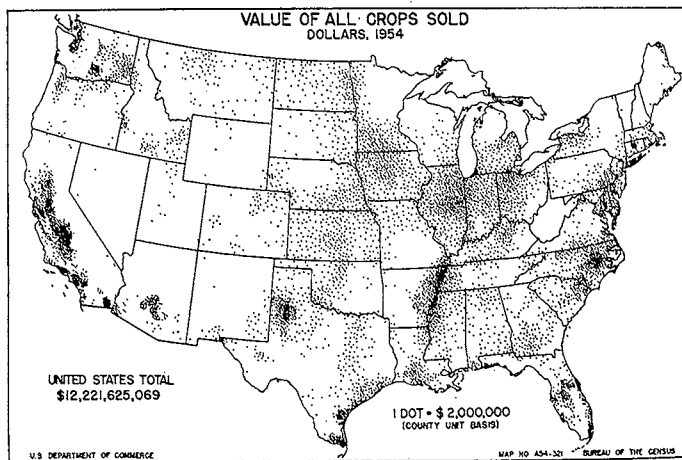


FIGURE 4.

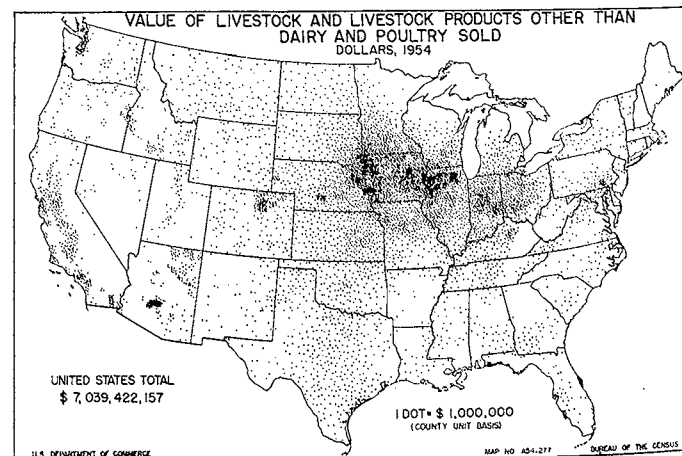


FIGURE 5.