

FIGURE 24.

Increases in soybean acreage and production have been a striking development in American agriculture during the last 30 years. In 1924 less than 2 million acres of soybeans were grown for all purposes and only a fourth of this acreage was harvested for beans (4). But the acreage increased gradually until 1934, and after that at a more rapid rate. At the same time, the proportion of the acreage harvested for beans increased from 25 percent in 1925 to 94 percent in 1956. The acreage harvested for beans in 1956 was estimated at 20.9 million acres (6, 1956). In 1954, soybeans for beans ranked sixth in acreage harvested and seventh in total value of production among all crops in the United States (6, 1955; 7). This rapid increase was made possible by the program of developing and testing improved varieties, by the development of markets for soybean oil and meal, and by the expansion of the soybean processing industry (4). It was encouraged also by the Government agricultural programs restricting the acreage of corn.

In the Corn Belt as a whole 9.7 percent of the total cropland on all commercial farms was in soybeans harvested for beans in 1954 (table 53). On cash-grain farms 16.3 percent of the cropland was in this crop. Livestock farms had smaller percentages of their cropland in soybeans than did cash-grain farms, but the livestock farms had a larger proportion of their cropland in oats. The Central Corn Belt had the largest proportion of cropland in soybeans and the Western Corn Belt had the smallest. Mainly because of the relatively low rainfall, the high summer temperatures, and the drying winds, soybeans are relatively less well adapted to the Western Corn Belt than are wheat and corn. Cash-grain farmers in the Central Corn Belt used 21.9 percent of their cropland for soybeans. At the other extreme were the livestock farmers in the Western Corn Belt, who used only 1.5 percent of their cropland for this crop.

The distribution of acreage of oats threshed or combined in the United States in 1954 is shown in figure 25. Oats are grown throughout most of the country, but especially in the northern half. The largest area of rather concentrated production is in the North Central States. Commercial farms in the Corn Belt had 19,343,798 acres of oats harvested for grain in 1954. This was 51.8 percent of the total acreage of oats threshed or combined on all commercial farms in the United States.

Oats harvested for grain (threshed or combined) were grown on 15.9 percent of the total cropland on all commercial farms in the Corn Belt in 1954 (table 53). This crop was second only to corn in total acreage harvested. Oats occupied a larger proportion of the cropland on livestock farms than on cash-grain farms. The largest proportion of cropland in oats was on livestock farms in the Northern Corn Belt; the smallest proportion was on cash-grain

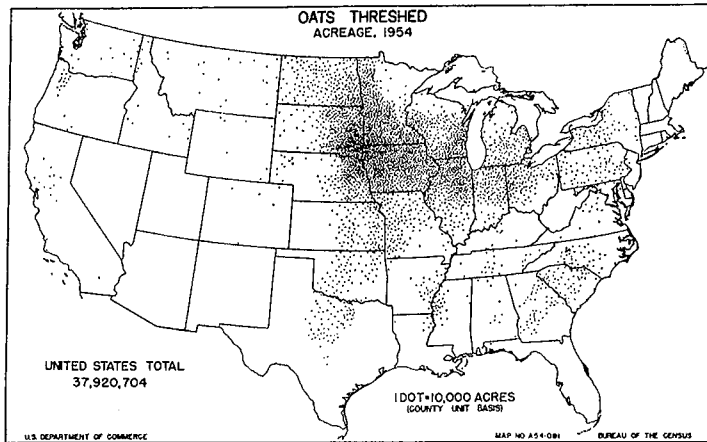


FIGURE 25.

farms in the Southern Corn Belt. The proportion of cropland in oats was exceeded by that in soybeans in the Southern Corn Belt and by that in wheat as well as in soybeans in the Eastern Corn Belt. Most of the oats produced are fed to livestock on the farms where the crop is grown. On some farms, especially on cash-grain farms, not all the oats produced are needed for feed, so a large proportion of the crop is sold.

Most of the wheat acreage in the United States is in the Great Plains and in other western States, but wheat is also an important crop in the Corn Belt (fig. 26). Commercial farms in the Corn Belt harvested 8,283,849 acres of wheat for grain in 1954. This was 16.4 percent of the 50,582,348 acres harvested for grain on all commercial farms in the United States. The proportion of total production in the Corn Belt was still greater because yields per acre of wheat averaged higher in the Corn Belt than in the rest of the country. The Corn Belt accounted for 23.2 percent of the total production of wheat on all commercial farms in the United States in 1954.

Wheat harvested for grain was grown on 6.8 percent of the cropland on commercial farms in the Corn Belt in 1954 (table 53). The proportion of total cropland used for wheat was highest in the Eastern Corn Belt and lowest in the Northern Corn Belt. A larger percentage of the cropland was used for wheat on cash-grain farms than on livestock farms. This was especially true in the Western and Southern Corn Belt. In the Western Corn Belt, for example, 16.5 percent of the cropland on cash-grain farms was in wheat, whereas only 4.5 percent of the cropland on livestock farms was in this crop.

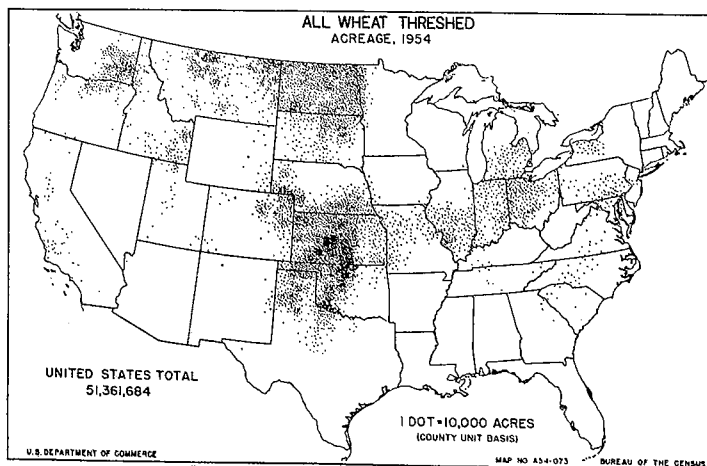


FIGURE 26.