## Section 2.—TRENDS IN COTTON PRODUCTION BY REGIONS

Historical data concerning the geographic location and the acreage, yield, and output of cotton, can give valuable insights on the role cotton plays in the several regions. The picture drawn by data on trends of the acreage, yield, and production of cotton for each region shows, in the aggregate, the results of the responses of thousands of actual and potential growers of cotton to the whole continuously changing range of economic forces and institutional arrangements that affect the production of cotton. Figure 5 indicates the aggregate changes in acreage and production of cotton in the United States during the 75-year period 1879–1954.

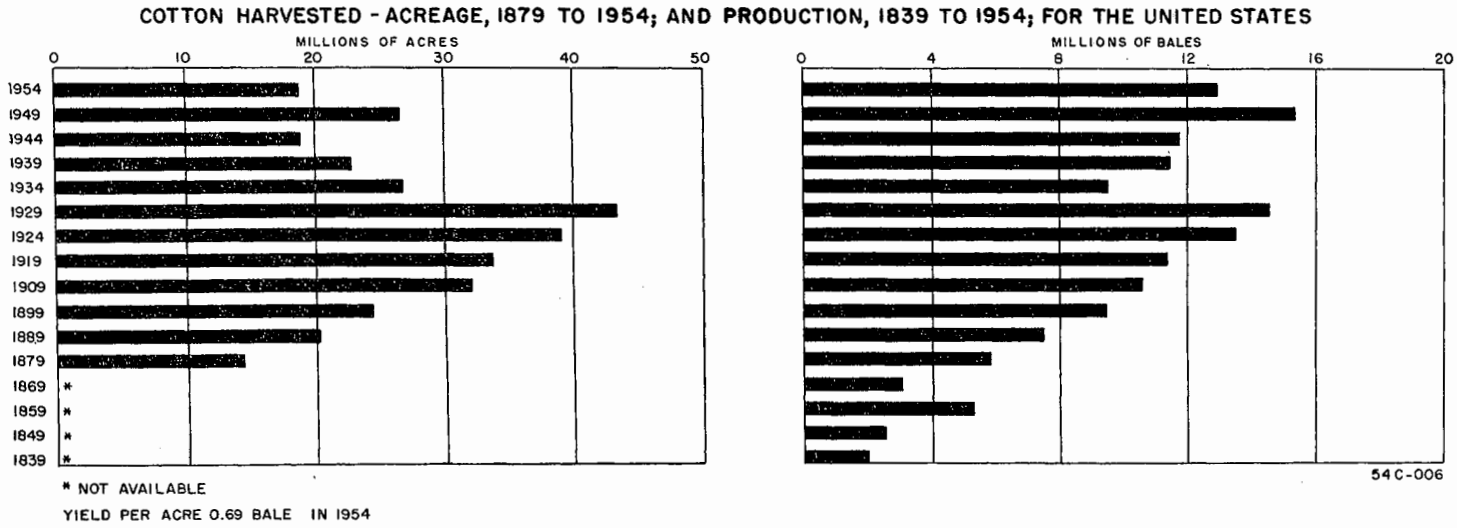


FIGURE 5.

Great changes have taken place during the past quarter-century in the overall picture of cotton production. In the 5-year period, 1928–32, an average of almost 41.5 million acres of cotton was in cultivation annually in the United States, whereas for the 5 years, 1950–54, the average acreage in cultivation was only 19.8 million acres—56 percent of the average acreage 22 years before. But the production of cotton in the period 1950–54 averaged 96 percent of that for the period 1928–32.

Behind these averages for two widely separated 5-year periods there is an interesting story of national and interregional adjustments to changing conditions of production and demand for cotton and for the resources used in its production.

The gist of this story is presented in the data of table 10.

The period 1928–32 represents the last 5 years of cotton production in this country prior to initiation of governmental price-support and acreage-control programs. The change in the acreage and production of cotton since 1928–32 is the result of widely varying regional adaptations to the changing conditions of production and demand.

For example, in 1954, the United States as a whole had in cultivation, on July 1, only 48 percent of the average cotton acreage for that date during the 1928–32 period. Three of the ten regions with which we are dealing (VIII, IX, and X) had far greater acreages of cotton in cultivation in 1954 than during the 1928–32 period. One additional region, the Mississippi Delta (Region IV), produced 28 percent more cotton from 29 percent fewer acres than in 1928–32. Production during 1954 in Regions VIII, IX, and X was, respectively, 590, 347, and 937 percent of their average for 1928–32. These four regions, in 1954, accounted for 39 and 54 percent, respectively, of the United States total of cotton acreage and production. Comparable percentages for 1928–32 are 17 and 21 percent.

In two of the regions (II and V) there has been a steady decline in cotton acreage and production since 1928–32. In Region II, cotton acreage in 1954 was only 24 percent of the regional average for 1928–32, while in Region V only 17 percent as much acreage was in cultivation as the average for the earlier period. The comparable figures for production in 1954 are 29 percent for Region II and 24 percent for Region V.

In the remaining regions (I, III, VI, and VII), the 1954 acreage as a percentage of each region's 1928–32 average acreage varies from 41 to 46 percent. The 1954 production, as a percentage of the 1928–32 average, ranges from 44 to 79 percent. In Regions I, III, and VI the range is only from 76 to 79 percent. It is thus evident that the fourth of these regions, Region VII, merits special attention in these comparisons, especially in regard to yields. For example, 1954 yields for Regions I, III, and VI, as percentages of their own 1928–32 averages, are, respectively, 169, 179, and 154. The comparable figure for Region VII is 108. The probable reasons for this virtually unchanged yield level since 1928 is that water limits the production in much of this region, and water is not available in sufficient quantity to permit the effective use of the commercial fertilizers that have played a major part in increasing the yields in other nonirrigated regions.