

Figure 6.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF DAIRY FARMING

Dairy farming may be characterized as an industry that can make use of practically any feed crop grown. Whether it be grain or hay, high-protein feed, or roughage, it can be utilized by milk cows. Basic to any feeding system with cows is the use of hays, other roughages, and pasturage. Dairy cows will produce 100 pounds of milk with the quantity of hay required to produce 110 pounds of beef or 125 pounds of mutton. This is accomplished with less grain than for any other class of livestock except sheep. The cow converts feed, much of which has a limited market, to a food product for which the market is almost universal.

In dairying there is also a greater use of family labor than in a business of similar size in any other livestock venture. This labor is needed day after day. In this way it may make possible the "marketing" of family labor which otherwise would remain unutilized.

The dairy farm produces both milk and meat. A farmer who raises his own replacements will produce one-half as much beef as a farmer with the same number of beef cows. In the aggregate, the sale of these cattle tempers the price of beef but it adds from 10 to 20 percent to the value of sales from the dairy herd.

Another characteristic of dairying is the production of an essential food for the human family that supplies many of the minerals and vitamins needed for satisfactory physical development. Milk is the most nearly universal food for growing children.

Dairy cows are ruminants and for high production must have large quantities of hay and other forages of good quality. One advantage of the major dairy-producing areas is the adaptability to hay production of their soil, topography, and climate. In most of the southern parts of the dairy areas a 3-year rotation of crops

is practiced, of which one-third is hay. Moving north within the area the growing season becomes cooler and shorter. So corn is less practical as a part of the cropping system, and increasing proportion of the cropland is devoted to hay until, in the more northern parts, four-fifths to nine-tenths or more of the harvested cropland is used for hay (fig. 6).

Another way of increasing not only the roughage production of dairy farms but also the feed production per acre is to use the corn crop for silage rather than for grain. Only a small fraction of the large acreage of corn in the Corn Belt is cut for silage but a much larger proportion of a smaller corn acreage is so used in the dairy area (fig. 7).

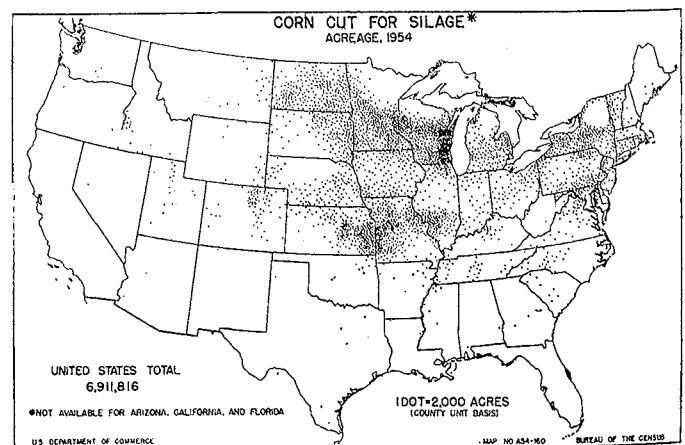


Figure 7.