

NORTHEASTERN DAIRY AREA

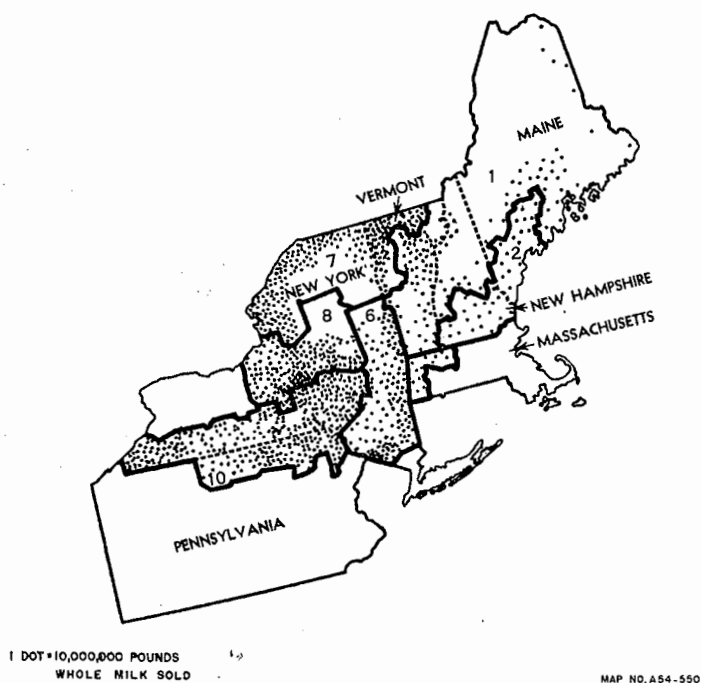


Figure 12.

THE NORTHEASTERN DAIRY REGION (Economic Subregions 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10)

This region, comprises Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, most of New York, and parts of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. It is the oldest dairy region of the United States. The soils are generally classed as lacking in natural fertility although they respond well to the use of farmyard manure and commercial fertilizers. Frequent summer rains, however, make it difficult to put up hay of the best quality. The topography generally is rolling to hilly so the fields for harvested crops are fairly small and much land is best suited for pasture.

The region has about two-fifths of the farmland in harvested crops and one-third in pasture. Occasional small localities are found where cash crops or poultry are more important sources of income than dairy. Aroostook County, Maine, is definitely a potato county with only 7 percent dairy farms. Five counties—in southern Maine, in New Hampshire, and in Vermont—have more poultry than dairy farms and in each of these counties the total sale of poultry products was greater than the sale of milk in 1954. In none of these localities does the poultry flock compete seriously with the dairy herd for land. Both types of farms depend on feeds shipped in from other parts of the country and the poultry flock uses very little land. The lake shore country of western New York has a concentration of fruit and vegetable farms and much of the resources is represented by these farms.

By and large, however, every part of the Northeastern Dairy Region is devoted to dairying.

The movement in this area away from the production of other livestock and cash crops and into the production of milk for fluid consumption, is explained by the fact that the whole eastern part of the country has become highly urbanized. There are so many milk cows that the local feed supplies can meet only a part of the requirements even though the production of harvested crops and grass has been increased through the use of fertilizers. Dairymen ship in most of the grain and concentrates used. Thus, the size of business is increased by the purchase of feeds from the Midwest.

The region still produces around one-fifth of the foreign types of cheese and cream cheeses of the country. One-half of that produced here is cream cheese. The region produces less than 4 percent of the butter and American types of cheese and about 8 percent of the condensed and evaporated milk. Milk cow numbers increased from 1.6 million in 1950 to 1.7 million in 1954 whereas, the number of dairy farms decreased from 75,494 to 67,521. Fewer and larger farms seem to be the trend throughout. Approximately one-seventh of the whole-milk sales of the United States are from this region.

The organization of these farms as reflected by income and expenses shows a great deal of comparability throughout the region. Maine and New Hampshire—Economic Subregion 1—have the smallest farm incomes both per farm and per acre of total cropland, averaging \$6,473 per farm and \$80 per acre of cropland. The largest incomes are in Economic Subregion 4 in the Hudson River Valley, where the average total value of sales is \$10,632. Every economic subregion of the area shows the extreme specialization of the dairy farms. Economic Subregion 1 not only has the smallest average income but it shows slightly more tendency to diversify its income, with 82 percent of the total income from the sale of milk, whereas all the other subregions show from 84 to 88 percent. Crop sales from dairy farms amount to less than 5 percent in every part of the area. Dairy farmers in central New York obtained 4.3 percent of their income from these sources while those in northern New York obtained the least, 1.7 percent.

The wide range in size as shown by economic class tabulation suggests that nearly 15 percent of the dairy farmers of this region are accepting modest incomes while 20 percent are making good incomes, Economic Classes I and II. There is little tendency for the smaller farms to diversify more than the larger except for those in Economic Class VI. Only 71 percent of the income of this group is from milk sales in comparison to an average of 86 percent for the other classes. Yet no one enterprise other than sales of cattle accounted for more than a minor part of the other income. (Tables 20 and 21.)

Feed purchases accounted for three-fifths or more of the specified expenses for every economic subregion and for most economic classes of the area. This amounts to \$25 per acre of total cropland, or \$97 per cow, and emphasizes the point already made that this is a feed-deficit region. The producing of this quantity of feed would require practically double the present cropland. The range in specified expenses of the different economic classes is as wide as the range in income.