Table 56.—Use of Fertilizer and Lime on Dairy Farms, by Economic Class of Farm, for the Atlantic Coast Area: 1954

Item	Economic class of farm						
	Total	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number of farms	26, 073	1, 651	9, 161	8, 649	4, 586	1, 721	305
Fertilizer:							
Percent of farms using	88. 0	91. 3	93. 9	89. 8	80. 9	70. 3	49. 2
Tons used per farm reporting	1	31	14	8	5	3	2
Acres upon which used per farm reporting	55	133	68	44	28	19	16
Average per acre fertilized:							
Pounds	396	462	405	360	349	343	299
Cost dollars	10	11	10	10	9	8	7
Lime:							
Percent of farms using	42. 5	63. 2	51. 8	39. 2	32. 0	23. 5	11. 5
Acres upon which used per farm reporting	20	40	21	16	12	14	7
Average per acre limed:							
Pounds	2, 351	2, 303	2, 331	2, 364	2, 508	2, 429	2, 462
Cost dollars	8	8	8	7	7	7	7

THE NASHVILLE BASIN AREA
(Economic Subregion 54)

The Nashville Basin, Subregion 54, is an island of comparatively fertile soil within a larger stretch of more rugged and less fertile land. It is small, about 120 miles long and 60 miles wide. The land is gently undulating to rolling with occasional ridges or broken sections. These stony ridges along with rough sections at the outer edges of the basin contain land that is useful mainly for pasture or woodland.

The soils are residual, of limestone origin, and very fertile. Nearly nine-tenths of the area is occupied by farms. This makes it one of the heaviest concentrations of farms in the South. The farms in general are small, averaging less than 100 acres. Approximately one-half of the land is classed as cropland but crops are harvested from only two-thirds of this acreage.

It is recognized as one of the major dairy areas of the South. Slightly more than one-third of the commercial farms are so classed. Another 30 percent are cash-crop farms. Most of the remaining one-third are livestock other than dairy, or general, farms. This suggests a varied agriculture where livestock enterprises are supplemented with or are in direct competition with cash crops. Although the sale of livestock products accounts for more than half the farm income in every part of the area, such cash crops as tobacco or cotton are important producers of income.

The metropolitan area is in the northern part of the basin around Nashville, which is the second largest city in the State. It has experienced a slow but steady growth. The large labor force is employed in making such products as nylon, cellophane, clothing, artcraft, furniture, and electrical appliances. Limestone for building purposes is quarried here.

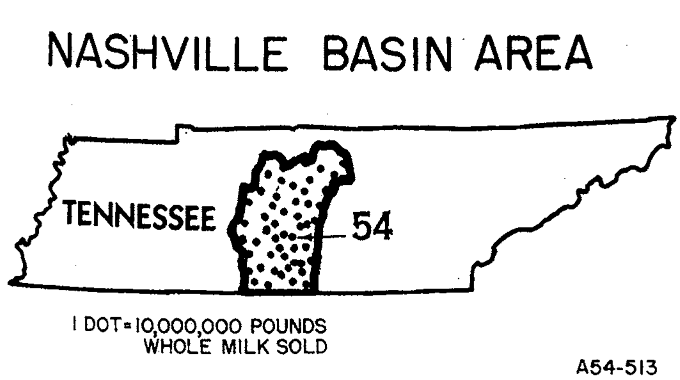

Figure 18.

Most of the dairy farms are in the southern half of the subregion rather than in the counties contiguous to the metropolitan area. The reason may well be that the earlier cream market found outlets within the territory and later, when markets for fluid milk developed, the slightly longer haul made little difference to the dairymen. Fifteen years ago, for example, there were as many farmers selling cream in the State as there were selling fluid milk. In 1954, only one-seventh as many farmers were selling cream. During this period fluid-milk sales per farm nearly doubled, although the number of dairy farms decreased. In 1949, there were 7,002 dairy farms in this area. The 1954 figures show only 6,681 dairy farms or 34 percent of all commercial farms. Total milk cow numbers increased from 86,500 in 1949 to 99,000 in 1954.

The average size of the dairy farm has increased during the 5-year period between Censuses, from 126 acres with 68 acres total cropland to 143 total acres with 73 acres of cropland. A direct comparison of the size of herds by economic class cannot be made with the 1950 Census.

The 1954 Census of Agriculture shows a gradual decrease in the average size of herds with decreasing total income. There is an unusually large number of dairy farms with fewer than 15 milk cows per herd. Further, more than four-fifths of the farms are in Economic Classes IV, V, and VI, while only one-twenty-fifth are in Classes I and II.

Other indications of the size of farms are number of livestock kept as well as farm real estate value. They had only 23 animal units per farm and an average of $11,200 farm land and building value per farm or $82 per acre of land in farms. Nearly two-thirds of the 6,681 dairy farms had less than $2,500 total value of farm products sold, and six-sevenths of them sold less than $5,000 worth of farm produce. This means that the dairy farms of the area, by and large, have modest incomes of which over two-thirds is from the sale of milk and cream.

The cropping systems varied considerably with the economic class. The lower income farms, Economic Classes IV to VI, planted more corn and less hay and small-grain crops than the larger farms. The acreage of land pastured seems to depend more upon physical factors than upon the volume of business. No economic class showed much variation from the average of two-thirds of the total farm being used for pasturage.

The livestock organization of these farms showed little difference between the largest and the smallest. Approximately three-fifths of the animal units of each economic class were milk cows. The relative number of hogs on hand at the time the Census was taken remained the same regardless of the total number of animal units. Poultry flocks were just enough to meet family demands for eggs and meat. A flock of 500 birds is too small to be given the special care required of an income-producing enterprise. These farms were stocked about the same when expressed in terms of total cropland per animal unit. Only one economic class showed as much as 10 percent variation from the average 3.2 acres of total cropland per animal unit. Harvested cropland has less significance on dairy farms in the South where winters are shorter and grazing seasons longer.

The smaller farms had no bigger portion of their income from the sale of crops than the larger farms (Table 57). Around one-eighth of the total value of sales of the smallest, as well as the largest, farms was from crop sales. This suggests that the larger farms of this area with dairy cows tend to specialize no more than do the smaller farms. Ten percent of the livestock income during 1954 was from the sale of hogs in comparison with 5 percent for the small farms. On the other hand, the smaller farms receive 25 percent of their livestock income from the sale of cattle in comparison with only 10 percent on the larger farms.