

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA

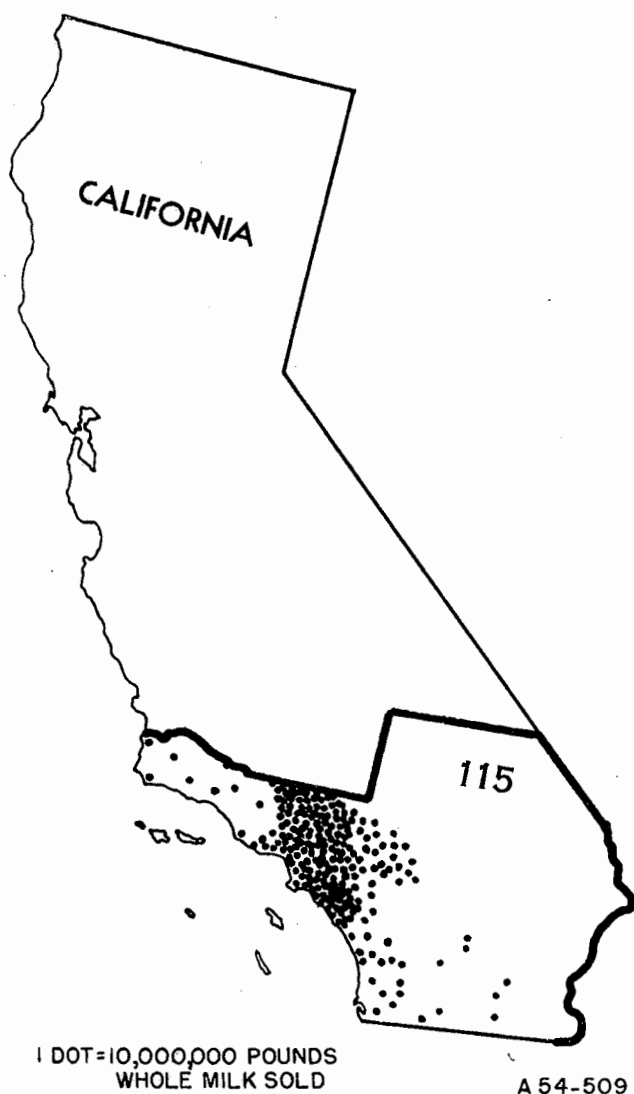


Figure 22.

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA
(Economic Subregion 115)

The West Coast probably has a more diversified pattern of agricultural production than any other agricultural section of the United States. Practically every type of farming is found here. Poultry, dairy, and other livestock farms compete with cash-grain, vegetable, and fruit farms for land, capital, and labor. Some of the most intensive systems of farming are found in the irrigated valleys where special crops are grown. General livestock farming and some ranching takes place where irrigation is not feasible or not practiced at the present time. Thirty percent of all farms are classed as special or noncommercial.

The Southern California Economic Subregion 115 is highly urbanized. This creates markets for many agricultural com-

modities. Agricultural production is limited to the coastal parts and the irrigated Imperial Valley. The Mojave Desert occupies most of the eastern part of the area.

The growing of citrus fruits is the prevailing agricultural activity and accounts for one-third of all farms, or 43 percent of the commercial farms. Poultry raising, vegetable growing, livestock, and general farming, each accounts for more farms than does dairying. These fruit and poultry farms are rather small, averaging less than 40 acres of cropland harvested. Dairy farms show an average of 32 acres. Where water is available 2 or more crops a year are grown on the land.

This subregion has a total of 34,537 farms. Only 23,847 are classed as commercial and 1,101 are dairy farms. One-fourth of the milk cows of the State are in this subregion, however, and they account for 30 percent of the milk output.

The dairy farms of Subregion 115 are unusual in that they show an average of more than 175 milk cows per farm. Slightly more than 97 percent of all milk cows are on these farms and they account for 99 percent of the milk sales, both in volume and value received. In 1950, only 91 percent of all milk cows of the subregion were on dairy farms. Figures do not show the percentage of milk sold from the dairy farms. But indications are that in 1949 these farmers sold a smaller portion of the total milk that reached the market than in 1954.

The immediate vicinity of Los Angeles has four-fifths of the dairy farms of the subregion and a slightly higher percentage of dairy cows. Most of the herds in this vicinity are very large, averaging between 200 and 300 cows. Dry-lot feeding is the common practice of these dairymen most of whom grow no crops. They depend on buying alfalfa hay of good quality for most of their feed. This hay is baled and trucked in from as far away as the San Joaquin Valley although most of it comes from irrigated fields in the Imperial Valley and the vicinity of Riverside. Relatively small quantities of grain are fed. During the last few years many of these dairymen have changed from the use of baled hay to soiling crops as the source of most of the feed. The crop, principally alfalfa, is cut one afternoon and trucked in to the milking herd that evening or early the next morning. The herd thus gets a more palatable feed and of a higher quality even though the baled hay has been excellent. A few farmers have their own hay fields which may be several miles from the milking herd. Their feeding practices are similar to those of farmers who buy their feed.

The usual milking life of cows in these dry-lot herds is 2 to 3 years and, in most instances, replacements are bought from farmers in other areas who either raise young animals for this purpose or have current surpluses from their milking herds. Many are shipped in even from as far away as southern Idaho. Weekly auctions provide a valuable source of replacement as well as an outlet for dry cows. They are usually located at the county seat towns. These auctions are established institutions which are of great service to both the buyer and the seller of milk cows. They are probably more useful in selling dry and cull cows than as a source of good milkers or fresh animals.

The labor force of these farms is more highly organized than in any other dairy area. The standard workload for the large herds is 60 cows per man with an extra man for every 5 or 6 men employed. This permits 1 day a week off for each regular milker. Practically all milking is by machine; 96 percent of all dairy farmers report the use of milking machines. All have electricity and practically all have piped running water and telephones.