

IMPORTANCE OF MAJOR WHEAT REGIONS

The proportion of the agricultural resources of farmers on commercial farms used by cash-grain farmers in three western wheat-producing regions is shown in table 6. Cash-grain farmers are those who receive at least 50 percent of their income from the sale of grain. Other commercial farmers get more of their income from sources other than grain. Cash-grain farmers in the three major wheat regions have 54 percent of all land and 70 percent of all cropland. They use 62 percent of all capital employed in agriculture, 55 percent of all the farm labor force, and produce 59 percent of all farm products sold in the three major wheat regions.

The adaptation of the wheat plant to a wide range of soil and climatic conditions helps to explain why wheat is grown extensively in the three major wheat regions. In the more productive areas of the Corn Belt, farmers find corn more profitable as a major crop and give it first consideration, even though the yields of wheat in the Corn Belt are higher than the yields in the Great Plains. In the Corn Belt, wheat is grown only because it combines well with other farm enterprises. In earlier years, wheat was grown extensively in the Eastern States and in the Corn Belt, but in recent decades corn and other feed grains have pushed wheat production into areas less favorable for corn production.

Table 6.—PERCENTAGE OF RESOURCES USED AND VALUE OF GROSS SALES FOR ALL COMMERCIAL FARMS REPRESENTED BY CASH-GRAIN FARMS FOR MAJOR WHEAT REGIONS: 1954

Region	All land	Crop-land	Capital investment	Labor force (man-equivalent)	Gross sales
Total, 3 major regions.....	54	70	62	55	59
Hard winter wheat.....	50	67	60	55	53
Hard spring wheat.....	55	68	60	55	62
White wheat.....	72	92	82	62	78

When examined in terms of total units and value, the resources used by the wheat farmers in these specialized wheat-producing

regions loom large. The hard winter wheat region ranks high in number of wheat farms, acres of wheat, wheat production, and total investment. It leads all other regions in total production of wheat. The 146,000 cash-grain farmers in the three regions produced approximately 45 percent of all wheat raised in the United States in 1954. They used nearly \$9 billion in capital investment and the equivalent of 190,000 men. (See table 7.)

Table 7.—NUMBER OF FARMS AND RESOURCES USED ON CASH-GRAIN FARMS IN THE MAJOR WHEAT REGIONS: 1954

Item	Unit	Hard winter wheat	Hard spring wheat	White wheat	Total, 3 regions
Total farms.....	Number.....	75,544	61,427	9,109	146,080
Acres of cropland.....	Thousands.....	30,962	33,493	7,219	71,674
Acres of wheat.....	do.....	12,029	10,132	2,586	24,747
Wheat production.....	Thousands of bushels.....	183,690	121,816	84,065	389,571
Value of wheat sales.....	Millions of dollars.....	371	231	175	777
Gross sales.....	do.....	654	480	238	1,372
Investment in—					
Land and buildings.....	do.....	3,768	1,900	1,033	6,701
Livestock.....	do.....	208	182	27	417
Machinery.....	do.....	696	717	166	1,579
Total.....	do.....	4,672	2,799	1,226	8,697
Man-equivalent.....	Number.....	91,041	82,833	14,755	188,629

A comparison of wheat farmers among regions and with the average of all commercial farmers in the United States is shown on a per-farm basis in table 8.¹ Compared with the United States average, wheat farmers are large operators. They use 2 to 4 times as much land and 1½ to 5 times as much capital as the average farmer in the United States, but need only slightly more than the average of man-labor because of the high degree of mechanization.

Marked differences among regions are found in the acreage and amount of investment in commercial cash-grain farms. The producers of white wheat have the largest farms and the largest investment per farm. The producers of hard winter wheat exceed those in the hard spring wheat area in amount of resources other than land.

Table 8.—NUMBER OF COMMERCIAL FARMS AND SPECIFIED CHARACTERISTICS PER FARM, FOR MAJOR WHEAT REGIONS AND THE UNITED STATES: 1954

Region and type of farm	Number of farms	All land in farms (acres)	Total cropland (acres)	Labor force (man-equivalent)	Total investment (dollars)	Investment in—			Gross sales (dollars)
						Land and buildings (dollars)	Machinery (dollars)	Livestock (dollars)	
All commercial farms.....	3,327,889	310	139	1.5	32,874	25,429	4,291	3,154	7,302
Hard winter wheat region.....	127,971	656	359	1.3	53,904	48,563	8,818	4,046	9,600
Cash-grain farms.....	75,544	558	410	1.2	54,666	50,038	9,210	2,749	8,656
Other commercial farms.....	52,427	797	286	1.5	52,368	46,422	8,252	5,914	10,961
Hard spring wheat region.....	104,378	821	471	1.4	41,426	28,646	11,212	4,749	7,409
Cash-grain farms.....	61,427	771	545	1.3	42,281	30,979	11,619	2,964	7,815
Other commercial farms.....	42,951	892	366	1.6	40,203	25,262	10,632	7,302	6,974
White wheat region.....	14,551	1,034	540	1.6	92,428	85,481	14,307	3,953	20,982
Cash-grain farms.....	9,109	1,188	793	1.6	120,910	99,206	18,244	3,005	26,088
Other commercial farms.....	5,442	776	118	1.6	45,614	32,523	7,718	6,272	12,436

¹ Comparison based on cash-grain farms in major wheat regions. Wheat is the principal cash grain produced on most of these farms.