Table 68.—A Comparison of Some Items for Organization, Expenses, and Home Facilities for Cash-Grain Farms in the White Wheat Region: 1954 and 1949

Item	Subregion 110	
	1949	1954
Total farms	8,165	9,109
Acres per farm:		
All land	1,147	1,188
Cropland	835	793
Wheat	384	284
Land pastured	340	368
Livestock—number per farm:		
All cattle	22	28
Milk cows	2	1
Hogs	4	4
Chickens	39	39
Expenditures per farm (dollars):		
Machine hire	312	369
Hired labor	1,577	1,638
Gas and oil	991	1,199
Total	2,880	3,206
Home facilities—percent of farms reporting:		
Telephone	76	82
Electricity	92	96
Home freezer	37	64

The number of cattle increased in all subregions. This was related to the increase in acres pastured, but particularly it was the result of increased cattle production during the period of high cattle prices prior to 1952.

Comparable items of expense for the two Census years are machine hire, hired labor, and gasoline and oil. The total of these expenses per farm is nearly the same for the 2 Census years in several subregions, but there were changes in expenditures for individual items. Machine hire and hired labor decreased in those areas where the wheat acreage declined significantly. However, in subregion 110 both machine hire and hired labor expenses increased from 1949 to 1954.

The proportion of farms with telephones, electricity, and home freezers increased in all eight subregions. Many rural communities in the Great Plains did not have electricity until after World War II, and some electric lines were constructed after 1949. This explains much of the increase in homes having electricity and home freezers. The use of telephones increased slightly during the 5-year period. Undoubtedly the use of these modern conveniences increased as the conveniences became available to farmers and farm families. Moreover, a part of the increase resulted from the relatively good incomes received by farmers in some years.

SOFT RED WINTER WHEAT

In the soft winter wheat area, other enterprises are more important than wheat on most farms. Here, few farms are classified as wheat farms, but the total wheat production is second only to that of the hard winter wheat region. The total soft red winter wheat production in 1954 was approximately 200 million bushels, or one-fifth of the United States total.

The soft red winter wheat belt extends from Missouri to Pennsylvania. It includes most of the wheat-growing area in the eastern half of the United States. The heaviest wheat production in this wide reach of country occurs in the southern part of the Corn Belt, although wheat is grown in nearly all of the States.

The soft winter wheat region receives 35 to 50 inches of rainfall and most of this falls during the growing season. The prevailing high precipitation and humidity produce a soft kernel, relatively low in protein. The winters are seldom so severe as to kill the crop. High summer temperatures usually do not occur until the wheat has matured.

The soils vary greatly, but most of the wheat is grown on deep, fertile soils. The topography varies from level to rolling, with rather steep slopes. Wheat is grown in rather small acreages per farm, in rotation with other crops. The wheat machinery is usually smaller than that used on the Great Plains. The smaller sizes of machines are due more to the smaller acreages of wheat per farm than to limitations imposed by the rolling topography.

Approximately 80 percent of the total soft red winter wheat is produced in the Corn Belt States and Pennsylvania. Though a relatively minor crop, the production of wheat has persisted here for many decades. Farmers have found it profitable to include wheat in their diversified type of farming. The relationships of wheat to other enterprises and to the efficient use of resources are the chief reasons for its continued production in this area.

Cropping conditions vary. Wheat is commonly grown on farms that also produce corn, hay, pasture crops, and frequently some oats, barley, or soybeans. Wheat fits into a rotation with such crops.

Sometimes the wheat is seeded after soybeans have been harvested on the same land or after corn has been cut for ensilage. Wheat may follow oats or barley as these crops mature in ample time for the sowing of winter wheat afterwards. In some cases, wheat is seeded as a companion or nurse crop for grass and legume seedings as wheat brings in some income while the hay or pasture crop is becoming established. Where wheat follows row crops, only one or two light tillage operations are necessary in making the seedbed as the land has been tilled during the early summer.

Here, wheat contributes to a more efficient use of the farmer's resources. Power units, field machinery, and man-labor can be used for wheat at a time when the other demands for machinery and labor are relatively low. Preparing the seedbed and seeding of winter wheat come between the last corn cultivation and corn harvest. Wheat harvesting may conflict with hay harvesting and with the cultivation of corn and soybeans; but with modern machinery, a small acreage of wheat can be harvested in a very short time. Many farmers have combines for harvesting other small grains and soybeans or they custom-hire their combining so no additional machinery is required for wheat.

Wheat is a desirable crop to many farmers because it brings in some cash at a time when they have few other products to sell and at a time when operating expenses are high. The winter wheat may contribute to the livestock enterprise by furnishing some pasture in the fall and early spring. Some of the wheat is fed, especially to poultry. Wheat straw provides a common source of bedding for livestock.

It is doubtful that wheat is more profitable on an acre basis than other crops, especially corn. It is grown because of its complementary relationship to other enterprises and because of the relatively small increase in cash costs required for its production. The more extensive use of labor and equipment reduces the cost per unit of work. Through its contribution to other enterprises and the increased efficiency in the use of resources, wheat increases the net returns for the entire farm operation. Wheat will undoubtedly continue to be grown in this area more widely known for its corn, soybeans, and livestock feeding.