

More than 300,000 farmers grow some wheat in the five major soft red winter wheat States (see table 69). The acreage per farm is small. More than one-fourth of the producers had less than 10 acres in wheat in 1954; and less than 1 percent had 100 acres or more. The fact that wheat is typically a small enterprise is even more clearly illustrated by the number of farmers reporting the quantity of wheat sold. Seventy-six percent of the producers sold less than 1,000 bushels while less than 1 percent sold 3,000 bushels or more.

Table 69.—WHEAT PRODUCTION IN SELECTED STATES IN THE SOFT RED WINTER WHEAT AREA: 1954

[Data are estimates based on reports for only a sample of farms]

Item	Total for selected States	Missouri	Illinois	Indiana	Ohio	Pennsylvania
Number of farms reporting	336,594	50,309	60,137	64,790	99,354	62,004
Acreage (1,000 acres)	6,342	1,156	1,532	1,289	1,704	661
Average acreage per farm:						
Production (1,000 bushels)	181,309	32,455	46,241	38,779	45,417	18,417
Yield per acre (bushels)	29	28	30	30	27	28
Value of crop (1,000 dollars)	370,519	66,532	96,182	78,334	93,558	35,913
Number of farms reporting by acres harvested:						
Under 10 acres	95,928	9,074	7,131	12,923	31,177	35,623
10-24 acres	163,241	26,917	30,337	35,278	48,501	22,208
25-49 acres	59,112	9,801	16,516	13,243	16,046	3,506
50-99 acres	15,803	3,695	5,324	2,974	3,217	593
100-199 acres	2,212	698	750	329	380	55
200 acres and over	298	124	79	43	33	19
Number of farms reporting bushels sold:						
Under 100 bushels	17,506	2,101	1,626	2,066	6,155	5,558
100-499 bushels	169,819	25,499	25,942	34,127	54,911	29,340
500-999 bushels	68,849	11,045	17,389	16,395	18,637	5,383
1,000-1,499 bushels	22,186	3,990	6,940	5,404	4,832	1,020
1,500-1,999 bushels	8,001	1,773	2,759	1,864	1,350	255
2,000-2,999 bushels	5,179	1,256	2,068	956	766	133
3,000-4,999 bushels	1,967	538	784	355	250	40
5,000-9,999 bushels	533	167	212	81	53	20
10,000 bushels and over	54	22	17	6	7	2

WHEAT PRODUCTION IN OTHER WESTERN REGIONS

The heaviest concentration of wheat production is found in those regions that have been described as the major wheat regions. Much of the remainder of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains area has been classed as the range livestock region where livestock provides the major source of income. However, scattered through this vast region are localities in which considerable wheat is grown. In these subregions there were 27,000 cash-grain farmers, in 1954, that produced more than 67 million bushels of wheat. Data regarding these subregions are given below for 1954.

Subregion	Number of cash-grain farms	Acreage of wheat	Bushels produced
		1,000	1,000
101	7,257	1,117	15,628
104	3,332	673	9,056
106	6,902	1,217	21,012
109	3,969	385	8,816
112	5,757	637	13,291
Total	27,217	4,029	67,803

In addition to that produced by these wheat farmers, a large quantity of wheat is grown by ranchers who combine stock-ranching with wheat farming. Most of these have been classified as livestock farms because livestock is their most important source of sales.

³ Hurd, Edgar B., "Wheat-Pea Farming in Washington and Idaho, 1935-53." Circular No. 954. U. S. D. A., Washington, D. C.

Wheat is grown in these areas under a variety of production conditions. Much of it is grown in dry-land areas where summer-fallowing is necessary. Some is grown in high mountain valleys and some on irrigated farms, particularly in Idaho and California, in rotation with other crops. The average yield in 1954 was 17 bushels which compares favorably with the yields in the major wheat regions.

SOME PRODUCTION PROBLEMS OF WHEAT FARMERS

Some of the production problems which specialized wheat farmers are facing merit more specific consideration in a review of the wheat industry.

Wheat farms in the major regions are large in comparison with other types of farms. But many wheat growers still face the problem of acquiring control of sufficient resources to make a satisfactory living. Continuous improvement in labor-saving equipment enables each worker to take care of more acres of wheat-land from year to year; therefore, more and more acres of cropland per worker are required if modern machinery is to be used efficiently. There has been a gradual increase in size of wheat farms. This increase is indicated for typical counties in the wheat areas in table 70.

Table 70.—CHANGES IN SIZE OF FARMS IN COUNTIES WHICH ARE TYPICAL OF THE VARIOUS WHEAT REGIONS: 1910-1954

County, State, and subregion	Average size of farm (acres)						
	1910	1920	1930	1940	1945	1950	1954
Polk, Minn.—(subregion 89)	252	255	247	261	276	302	325
Ward, N. Dak.—(subregion 90)	326	387	434	454	547	604	650
Brown, S. Dak.—(subregion 91)	460	442	441	458	503	525	580
Clay, Nebr.—(subregion 93)	182	196	202	231	256	279	311
Saline, Kans.—(subregion 94)	229	234	249	248	251	305	374
Kit Carson, Colo.—(subregion 103)	321	500	594	866	1,148	1,175	1,267
Sheridan, Mont.—(subregion 105)	(¹)	480	600	705	905	1,048	1,092
Lincoln, Wash.—(subregion 110)	566	715	906	1,038	1,225	1,335	1,447

¹ Not organized until 1913.

The wheat-pea farms of Washington and Idaho serve as an example of the growing problem of acquiring sufficient capital.³ Changes in size of farm, value of real estate, and working capital from 1935 to 1953 were as follows:

Item	1935	1940	1945	1950	1953
Acres per farm.....number	389	426	444	482	512
Value of real estate.....dollars	22,173	29,057	51,162	89,759	111,616
Working capital.....dollars	3,934	6,912	13,379	17,847	23,729
Total investment.....dollars	26,107	35,969	64,541	107,606	135,345

A part of the change in dollar investment was due to change in price level. Changes have been somewhat more rapid in this wheat-pea area than in some other wheat areas during the last 20 years, but somewhat similar increases can be noted in other regions.

High capital requirements represent a serious problem to many farmers. This is especially true of a beginning farmer. Even though he starts as a tenant, the large amount of working capital required to operate an efficient unit is difficult to acquire. If the young farmer starts with little capital on a relatively small farm his net income may not be enough to accumulate the capital needed for the essential operation of a more efficient unit. All of his income is likely to be needed to pay family living and operating expenses.