

POULTRY PRODUCERS AND POULTRY PRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

The place of poultry in American agriculture today is vastly different from what it was several decades ago. Great changes have occurred in the number of poultry on farms and in the methods of production, the distribution of poultry production, and the demand for poultry and poultry products.

From the time of early settlement until about 40 years ago, a poultry enterprise was found on virtually every farm. It was traditionally a minor sideline associated with such farm operations as the production of cash grain, livestock, dairy products, or cotton. Poultry meat was mainly the byproduct of egg production. Chickens that were no longer laying eggs at a satisfactory rate were sold for meat and the cockerels that were raised with the pullets were disposed of as fryers or roasters. A limited number of chickens were grown especially for meat. Poultry meat from these sources was supplemented with turkeys, ducks, and geese.

Evidences of decisive changes began to appear in the early 1930's. At about that time four developments began to take place in the poultry industry. (1) With a greater emphasis on flocks of commercial size, light breeds and strains of chickens gradually replaced the meat breeds, for use in making replacements in the laying flocks. (2) Feeding, breeding, and management practices were so improved that more eggs were produced per layer, so fewer layers were needed to supply the eggs that the market demanded. (3) As the technique of "sexing" chicks became perfected, only the female chicks were sold by the hatcheries. The male chicks were destroyed under the assumption that it was unprofitable to grow them out. (4) Chicken broilers were beginning to claim a profitable part in the industry.

In 1910, 5.6 of the 6.4 million farms in the United States, or 88 percent of all farms, kept chickens. Since then the number of farmers with chickens has declined steadily; in 1954, only 71 percent of the 4.8 million farms reported chickens.

The proportion of farms with chickens declined in all geographic regions. However, the change in the percentage of farms reporting chickens was greatest in New England and the smallest in the West South Central States.

In New England, 79.5 percent of all farms reported chickens in 1910 as compared with only 46.2 percent in 1954. In the East South Central States, 85.9 percent of the farms had chickens in 1910 as compared with 79.5 percent in 1954.

Although the number of farms keeping chickens has declined during the last 45 years, the total number of chickens has increased more than 50 percent.

Statistics give substantial evidences of the changes during these several decades. Aside from chickens, the 1910 Census of Agriculture shows that 870,000 farmers had turkeys, 660,000 had geese, and 500,000 had ducks. The combined number of ducks and geese on farms added up to 7½ million compared with 3½ million turkeys. During the 44-year period from 1910 to 1954 the numbers of ducks and geese increased slowly while the number of turkeys mounted. In 1954, only 11 million ducks and 1.7 million geese were raised compared with 63 million turkeys—heavy and light breeds.

In 1954, farm sales from poultry and poultry products, as reported in the Census, totaled about 2 billion dollars for the United States. Of this amount, \$917 million came from the sale of chicken eggs, \$558 million from broilers, \$140 million from other chickens sold, and \$304 million for the sale of turkeys, ducks, geese, and miscellaneous poultry and their eggs. This is equal to 28 percent of the income from sales of all farm animals (cattle, hogs, sheep, horses, and mules) and equal to 58 percent of the income from the sale of dairy products.

Poultry production is more important in some parts of the country than in others. In New England, the sale of poultry and poultry products accounted for 84 percent of the total income from livestock and poultry, and their products in 1954; in the Middle Atlantic States, 64 percent. On the other hand, in the Mountain States poultry sales accounted for only 6 percent of the total sales of livestock, poultry, and poultry products.

Table 2.—PERCENTAGE OF FARMS WITH CHICKENS, BY GEOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS: 1910 TO 1954

Geographic division	1910	1920	1925	1930	1935	1940	1945	1950	1954
United States.....	87.7	90.5	86.4	85.4	85.6	84.5	83.6	78.3	71.4
New England.....	79.5	81.7	77.6	72.8	64.5	53.6	55.6	40.2	46.2
Middle Atlantic.....	91.4	91.7	87.7	86.9	82.0	76.2	74.1	67.5	61.0
East North Central.....	93.0	94.1	91.2	91.2	88.5	84.3	83.4	75.3	67.7
West North Central.....	90.7	93.3	91.5	92.2	89.1	88.2	87.7	81.2	76.5
South Atlantic.....	87.3	90.8	87.0	85.8	87.5	87.0	84.5	81.5	73.4
East South Central.....	85.9	90.0	85.2	83.4	87.1	88.3	87.4	85.3	79.5
West South Central.....	85.6	89.0	82.8	82.2	87.2	89.4	88.8	82.6	75.5
Mountain.....	69.1	80.6	78.6	75.3	74.4	73.0	77.7	69.7	61.8
Pacific.....	77.9	82.1	72.0	69.2	68.9	64.7	69.1	59.3	48.0

Table 1.—VALUE OF LIVESTOCK AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS SOLD, FOR THE UNITED STATES AND GEOGRAPHIC DIVISIONS: 1954

Geographic division	Value of livestock and livestock products sold (dollars)						Value of poultry and poultry products sold as a percent of—		
	Total 1	Poultry and poultry products	Dairy 2	Livestock and livestock products other than—			All livestock and livestock products	Livestock and livestock products excluding dairy	Dairy products
				Dairy and poultry	Dairy products	Poultry and poultry products			
United States.....	12,292,424,300	1,918,935,878	3,334,066,274	7,039,422,157	8,958,358,035	10,373,488,431	15.6	21.4	57.6
New England.....	353,944,583	143,149,632	184,109,033	26,685,918	169,835,550	210,794,951	25.8	84.3	77.8
Middle Atlantic.....	1,032,563,394	273,185,005	603,689,096	155,688,693	428,874,293	759,377,789	26.5	63.7	45.3
East North Central.....	2,750,972,015	285,625,079	965,260,190	1,510,086,746	1,795,712,425	2,465,346,936	10.4	15.9	29.9
West North Central.....	3,825,467,516	329,726,452	532,111,199	2,963,629,865	3,293,356,317	3,495,741,064	8.6	10.0	62.0
South Atlantic.....	912,969,766	350,653,386	257,719,027	304,597,353	655,250,739	562,316,380	38.4	53.5	136.1
East South Central.....	526,774,850	93,093,607	146,084,760	286,696,483	379,790,090	433,681,243	17.7	24.5	63.3
West South Central.....	926,171,273	155,131,905	174,110,453	596,928,915	752,060,820	771,039,368	16.7	20.6	89.1
Mountain.....	905,142,066	46,032,090	121,327,106	737,782,870	783,814,960	859,109,976	5.1	5.9	38.0
Pacific.....	1,058,418,246	242,337,522	358,755,410	457,325,314	699,662,836	816,080,724	22.9	34.6	67.6

1 Includes cattle, hogs, sheep, horses, mules, wool, mohair, chickens, chicken eggs, other poultry and poultry products, milk, and cream. The livestock and livestock products only includes cattle, hogs, sheep, horses, mules, wool, and mohair.
2 Milk and cream.