

SOME DIFFERENCES BY ECONOMIC SUBREGIONS

The economic subregions are quite large in the Western States (see Figure 10). This is necessarily so because of the extensive nature of the ranching and farming there. As the ranching and farming units are large and there are fewer farms in terms of area, the statistical summaries must be on a basis of large subregions. As a result there may be considerable dissimilarities within some of the subregions. Where this situation prevails, an attempt will be made to point out some explanation of major differences.

For each of the economic subregions, the Census materials have been summarized for all farms to give a classification of major farming types. In addition, within each of these types of farming a summarization has been made by economic size classes for each type. The concern here is with the summaries of the economic size classes for the major farm types known as livestock farms, which, in the Western States, contain most of the stock ranches. The economic size classes into which each major farm type is divided are (1) Class I farms, with an income from sales, in 1954, in excess of \$25,000; (2) Class II farms, with an income of \$10,000 to \$24,999; (3) Class III farms, with an income of \$5,000 to \$9,999; (4) Class IV farms, with an income of \$2,500 to \$4,999; (5) Class V farms, with an income of \$1,200 to \$2,499; (6) Class VI farms, with an income of \$250 to \$1,199.

This part of the analysis of differences in western stock ranching, consequently, concerns the differences in certain of the economic aspects of the several different economic size classes of stock ranches in the Western States, and this analysis is made by economic subregions. These data are analyzed in the following pages, with a summarizing table for each of the western subregions where livestock ranching is important. A brief description is given concerning the resources, the geography, and the natural and economic factors for each subregion within the four general livestock regions of the West.

The Great Plains

The Great Plains area is divided into several economic subregions, each having within it physical and economic phenomena common to the livestock ranches in the area but somewhat different in combination or magnitude from those in other economic subregions.

Economic subregion 98.—This subregion consists principally of the Rio Grande Plain of Texas (see Figure 10). It is essentially a livestock ranching subregion, but within it are local crop-specialty farming areas and other types of farming. The Rio Grande Plain merges with the Gulf coastal prairies in this subregion, which is natural grassland territory that has a problem of brush control on rangeland.

This subregion has a few very large livestock ranches. Only about one-eighth of the livestock farms were classified in Economic Classes I and II (see Table 6). The average number of animal units per ranch for all ranches (an animal unit calculated as 1 head of stock cattle or 5 ewes) is not so large as for many of the other western subregions, but the average size of the Class I ranches is by far the largest of all of the western subregions. The largest size class of the ranches accounts for approximately 5 percent of the ranches and 44 percent of the animal units of livestock for the subregion. The two smallest of the ranch size classes account for approximately 51 percent of the ranches and 13½ percent of the animal units of livestock for the subregion.

This subregion then has the greatest extreme in the contrast between large and small ranches. The small ranches, with less than 100 animal units of livestock, do not afford a full-time job for an operator; those with less than 60 animal units are definitely subeconomic in size unless there is some complementary enterprise.

Table 6 shows that there is a great contrast between large and small ranch units in the number of animal units of livestock handled per worker (family and hired) and consequently in the efficiency in the use of labor. A comparison of Table 6 with the following tables reveals that a considerable proportion of subeconomic ranching units prevails in nearly all of the western subregions.

This picture of the few animal units of livestock per worker on the small ranches is distorted somewhat by the fact that a considerable number of these small units do have some other agricultural enterprise. Essentially, however, most of these operations in the small size classes are subeconomic stock ranches.

Land values are high and there is a consequent high investment in land and buildings per animal unit of livestock. This averages approximately \$497 per animal unit for all size classes, and only the largest size class averages much below the general average. Drought and the consequent decrease in livestock numbers probably has accentuated this extreme. The general average for all western subregions of the investment per animal unit, in land and buildings, is approximately \$450.

TABLE 6.—LIVESTOCK FARMS IN SUBREGION 98, BY ECONOMIC CLASS OF FARM: 1954

Item	Total	Economic class of farm					
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Number of farms.....	4,364	215	335	650	935	1,284	945
Percent distribution.....	100.0	4.9	7.7	14.9	21.4	29.4	21.7
Livestock, average number per farm:							
Cattle.....	177	1,588	385	164	97	58	33
Sheep.....	12	114	29	8	8	4	1
Animal units.....	180	1,611	391	166	99	59	33
Animal units, total.....	783,801	346,331	131,106	107,611	92,364	75,388	31,091
Percent distribution.....	100.0	44.2	16.7	13.7	11.8	9.6	4.0
Man-equivalent per farm.....	1.8	9.5	2.8	1.9	1.4	1.1	1.1
Animal units per man-equivalent.....	99	170	141	86	73	54	30
Hired labor per farm.....							
dollars.....	1,294	12,878	2,875	1,231	585	357	117
Hired labor per animal unit.....	7.20	7.99	7.35	7.43	5.92	6.07	3.55
Investment in land and buildings per animal unit.....	497	385	519	544	530	639	614
Value of land and buildings, per farm.....dollars.....	89,385	620,362	203,058	90,343	52,463	37,707	20,264
Value of livestock per farm.....dollars.....	12,255	107,903	26,761	11,476	6,960	4,026	2,304
Value of land and buildings and livestock per farm.....dollars.....	101,640	728,265	229,819	101,819	59,423	41,733	22,568
Value of all farm products sold per farm.....dollars.....	8,345	91,799	15,877	7,360	3,682	1,832	831
Livestock and livestock products sales as a percent of value of all farm products sold.....	93.7	95.4	93.1	89.8	91.0	93.2	94.4

Economic subregion 100.—This southern plains subregion is the Edwards Plateau district of west-central Texas (see Figure 10). This is a subregion of combination cattle and sheep ranching. In its high investment in land and buildings per animal unit of livestock, it exceeds that of subregion 98. Because of drought, a considerable reduction in livestock has taken place in this subregion.

The livestock require only a small quantity of winter supplemental feedings, and ranching operations of adequate economic size consist of 125 to 150 animal units per man-year of work. Table 7 shows that only the Class I ranches meet this standard, as in Rio Grande Plains district more than half of the livestock farms are small units with gross income of under \$5,000.