

INTRODUCTION

The uses made of the land resources of this country are the subject of this graphic summary. Using data available from the 1959 Census of Agriculture and information collected from other Federal agencies, it is possible to present graphically the land use situation in the Nation as it exists today and to evaluate some of the changes that are taking place. Compilation and summarization of information about the use of land resources that is available from the several Federal agencies has been completed by the Farm Economics Division, Economic Research Service, of the United States Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the Agriculture Division, Bureau of the Census. These summaries of the major uses of land have also been made in earlier years by the Farm Economics Division.

The historical continuity in the collection, compilation, and interpretation of data about the uses of land in the United States has proved invaluable in the study of present land-resource problems. Planning for future growth is also aided by the existence of reasonably uniform information about major land uses in the past 50 years.

The present extent, location, and productivity of land used for different purposes is graphically presented in this report. Such information is needed for the analysis of present and prospective agricultural and general economic conditions for the country as a whole and also for different areas of the country. The present attention being given to area redevelopment in the United States is an example of the need for careful examination of areal differences in the utilization of resources. A graphic presentation of land use data can serve effectively in bringing about a better understanding of the basic facts about land resources and their use.

Competition for the use of land is a topic which is currently attracting much attention. Urban development; the creation of more recreational areas, particularly near large centers of population; and the preservation of wilderness areas and natural habitats for wildlife are matters frequently discussed among those interested in resource use. Along with these uses of land for living space, recreation, and wildlife we have the basic uses made of land resources in producing food and fiber and wood products. Our agricultural and forestry requirements must be effectively defined if we are to have adequate land resources

to meet the long-term demands for the products of our farms and forests made by an expanding population desiring an improved level of living.

The land resources of our Nation are not inexhaustible. Ours has been a rich heritage of land well suited for the production of crops, the grazing of livestock, the growing of trees, and the enjoyment of life. Our great technological progress has made possible a high level of productivity from these resources. Hardly in world history has a nation been faced by such chronic problems of surplus production of basic agricultural products as have existed in the United States during the past decade. We shall need to strive for solutions to these problems that will be in keeping with the realization that the future welfare of the people not only of our own country but of the whole world will be vitally affected by the decisions that are made now relative to use of our land resources. Such decisions must be based upon the study of many facts, among which are some that are graphically analyzed in this report.

In the maps, charts, and text, terminology consistent with the various definitions contained in the 1959 Census of Agriculture is used. In describing and locating areas, commonly accepted geographical terms are used. In presenting data by States, farm production regions or divisions are used in order to obtain more agriculturally related combinations of States than the geographic divisions used by the census. Use of farm production regions permits the presentation of significant regional differences in land use that are often obscured in census data. Unless otherwise stated, the farm production regions are used throughout this graphic summary. In order to avoid confusion, the comparative grouping of census geographic divisions and farm production regions is shown by the accompanying two maps. In order that Alaska and Hawaii may be included, separate data for these two States have been presented in several instances where it was appropriate to do so.

Since the last graphic summary was published, Alaska and Hawaii have joined the family of States. In recognition of the fact that information about these States has generally been reported separately in previous censuses, particular attention is given to the land-resource characteristics of these States in this report. It is appropriate to do this, since there is need on the part of many who use statistics dealing with land utilization to become acquainted with the impact that inclusion of data for these States will have upon the total statistical picture presented on a 50-State basis rather than the 48-State basis which has been used for nearly 50 years.

