

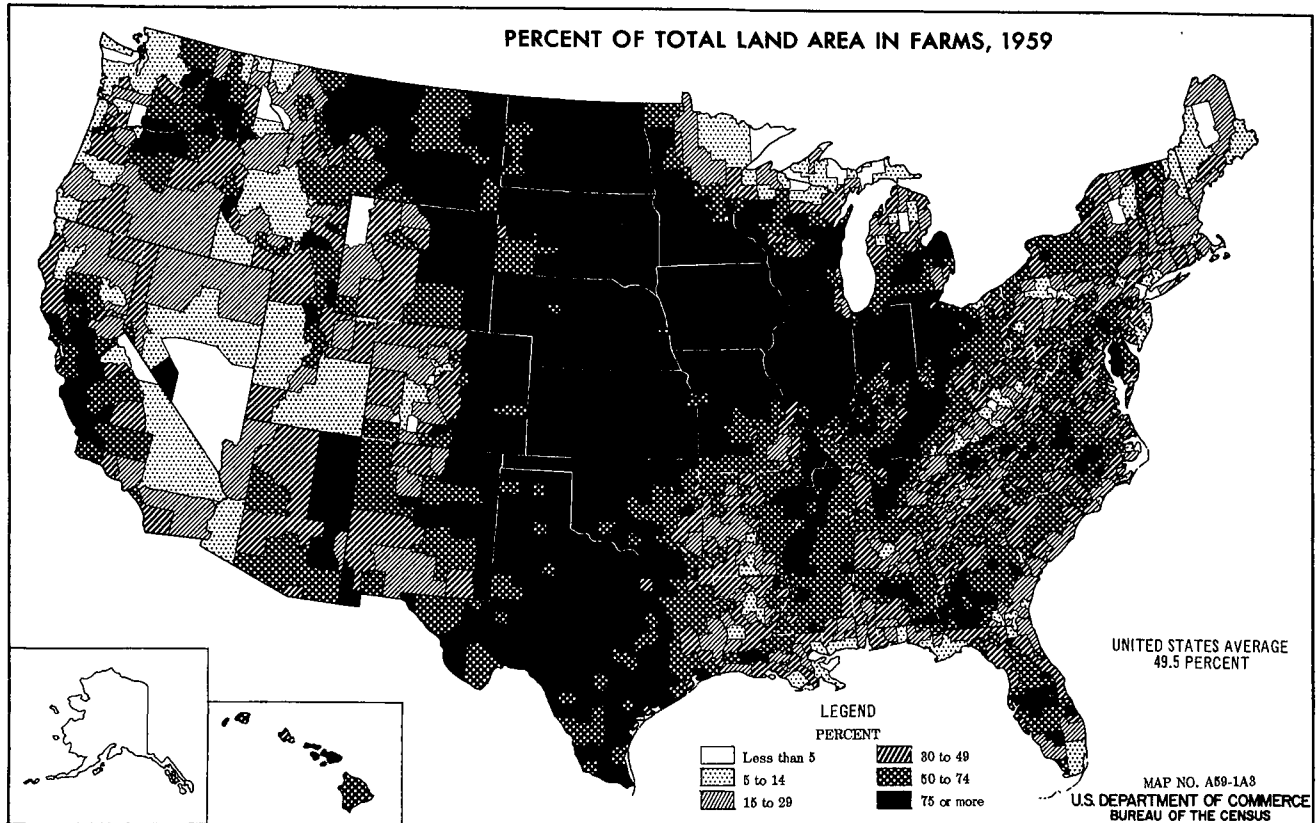
## A GRAPHIC SUMMARY

## LAND IN FARMS

The admission of Alaska and Hawaii to statehood in 1959 greatly enlarged the land area of the United States. Total land area grew from 1,903,824,640 acres in 1954 to 2,271,343,360 acres in 1959, an increase of nearly 20 percent. However, because only a small portion of Alaska is used for agricultural purposes, the proportion of land in farms for the entire United States declined significantly. In 1959 only 49.5 percent of the total land area in the United States was included as land in farms compared with 60.8 percent in 1954. This does not mean that 50.5 percent of the land area was used entirely for nonagricultural uses.

Millions of acres of public lands were grazed under a permit system, and some land that was in the Conservation Reserve Program was not included as farmland even though it would come under the general classification of agricultural land.

Within the conterminous portion of the United States—that is, that part excluding Alaska and Hawaii—the proportion of land in farms increased continuously from 1880 to 1950. Most of the increase was directly related to the rapid growth of the Nation around the turn of the century and to the high demand for farm products during the emergency periods of the two world wars. Between 1949 and 1959, however, a net decrease of 3.3 percent of land in farms took place.



Part of the decrease in land in farms can be attributed to whole farms being placed in the Conservation Reserve Program. Part resulted from urban expansion, with both factories and homes being established in rural areas; part from the conversion of crop and pasture land to woodland and forest land; and a small part from agricultural land being taken for new highway construction. Also, the change in the census definition of a farm contributed in a minor way to the reduction of land in farms.

Many factors affect the location of agricultural production. Some of the more important ones that encourage locational shifts of production are changes in the relative efficiency of production in different areas as a result of new technology; improvements in processing, marketing, and transportation of farm products; and shifts in population. All of these factors have had an effect upon the differences between regions in the changing proportions of land area in farms.

In the Northeast, a general downward trend in the proportion of land in farms has persisted since 1880, the decline being especially rapid between 1910 and 1930. Between the peak year of 1880 and 1959, 31.9 million acres of farmland were allocated to other uses. Thus 47 out of every 100 acres in farmland in

1880 were used for some other purpose in 1959. This region now has 3.2 percent of the total United States farmland.

In the North Central region the proportion of land in farms increased by an average of 8.6 percent each decade from 1880 to 1920. The upward trend continued at a slower rate until about 1940, when 80.2 percent of the land area was reported as farmland. Since then a slight decline has occurred, so that by 1959, only 79.8 percent of the land area was devoted to agricultural purposes. This region now contains one-fifth of the total land area in the United States and one-third of the farmland.

The 16 States of the South now account for one-fourth of the total land area of the United States and nearly one-third of the farmland. This region has had a more uneven trend in the proportion of land in farms than any other region. Between 1880 and 1900, 127.1 million acres of land were added to the farm total. In the next 25 years, a gradual decline took place, which was followed by an upward trend from 1925 to 1950. By 1950 a peak had been reached in the proportion of land in farms with 393.2 million acres of land in farms. Then another downward trend began, and 35.8 million acres were shifted from farms to some other use by 1959.