

Section I.—AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Resources used to produce agricultural products are many and varied. Some are of a rather fixed nature such as land and buildings, the farm operator's labor and management, the available labor of his family, surface and ground water, etc. Other resources are purchased as required. These include hired labor, fertilizer, lime, feed, seed, and many other items. This section presents briefly the nature and extent of many of the more important resources used in agricultural production including their distribution, quantity, trends in use, etc.



LAND

The land area of the 50 States is 2,271 million acres. The total land in farms in the United States in 1959 was 1,124 million acres or 49.5 percent of the land area. If no division is made between land in farms and land not in farms then the total land in each of the major uses in 1959 would be as follows:

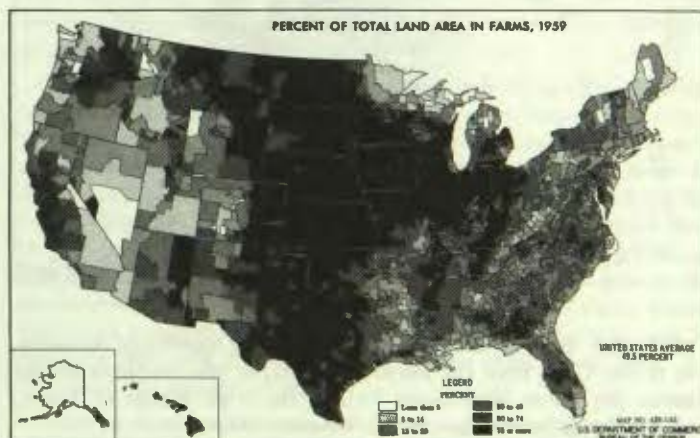
	<i>Million acres</i>
Cropland, including cropland used only for pasture.....	448
Pasture and grazing land including woodland and forest land pastured and grazed.....	887
Forest and woodland not pastured nor grazed....	500
Other land, total.....	436

Data on land use refer only to area. There are great variations in the quality of land having various uses. The quality of the various kinds of cropland varies from use to use and area by area, and also within areas. The cropland used only for pasture supplies much more feed per acre than other pasture and grazing land. There are similar variations in the productivity of woodland and forest land.

The acreage of land in farms, including that reported for the new States of Alaska and Hawaii, dropped from 1,161 million acres in 1950 to 1,124 million acres in 1959. This drop of 38 million acres was due to several factors. In the first place, a change was made in the definition of a farm between the census of 1954 and that of 1959. However, the decrease in land in farms resulting from this change in definition amounted to only 6 million of the 38 million acre decrease. Part of the decrease can be attributed to the expansion of urban areas, since 7 million acres of the 38 million acre decrease was in counties included in standard metropolitan areas. The Soil Bank program, which retired many whole farms from agricultural production, was also a significant factor.



The percent of the total land area in farms varies throughout the United States. In the Great Plains and the Corn Belt a high proportion of the counties have 75 percent or more of their total land area in farms. West of the Great Plains, inadequate rainfall and mountainous topography explain the smaller proportion of land in farms over extensive areas. Large acreages of land in the Western States have remained in public ownership and a considerable acreage of this land is grazed under permits from the United States Government. This land is not included as land in farms. East and south of the Corn Belt hilly topography, infertile soils, and poor drainage extend over sizeable areas reducing the percentage of land in farms.



Cropland.—A large part of the Nation's agricultural production comes from the land used for crop production. The total cropland in 1959 amounted to 448 million acres and comprised 40 percent of the land in farms and 20 percent of the total land area in the United States. The total cropland includes 66 million acres of cropland used only for pasture.

There are large concentrations of cropland in the Corn Belt and the eastern part of the Great Plains. Other concentrations occur along the lower Mississippi River and in the States bordering the Great Lakes.