

Irrigated Land in Farms

Although the number of irrigated farms increased up to 1954 then decreased in number since, each census since 1935 has marked an increase in acreage of land irrigated. In the 17 Western States and Louisiana, the 1974 acreage irrigated has nearly tripled since 1935. In the 30 Eastern States, Alaska, and Hawaii irrigated acreage increased nearly 17-fold in this time period. The difference in rate and timing of development reflects the differences in climate in the East and West. In much of the arid West, irrigation has been a prerequisite to cultivated crop production. While irrigation during short rainfall periods in the Eastern States can be a definite benefit to production, it is seldom required to prevent complete failure.

The 1974 census shows that 41.2 million acres were irrigated in the 50 States. In comparison with previous censuses, this represents an increase of 2.1 million acres irrigated, or 5.4 percent

since 1969, and an increase of 4.2 million acres irrigated, or 11.3 percent since 1964. Most of the acreage increase in irrigated land has occurred in the 17 Western States and Louisiana. This area has shown an increase of 1.9 million acres since 1969 and an increase of 3.6 million acres since 1964. However, in terms of percentage increase in irrigated land, the 30 Eastern States, Alaska, and Hawaii have shown the largest increase at 7.1 percent since 1969, and a 19.2 percent increase since 1964.

Crops by Acres Irrigated

The most common crops grown on irrigated land are listed in descending order in table 3 by percent of crop irrigated in 1974. Also shown are acres irrigated and acres harvested by crop. The importance of irrigation to the production of selected crops is clearly indicated by the percent of the total acreage of each crop that is grown under irrigation. In general, the crops which produce the greater monetary returns per

acre have a greater percentage of the total acreage irrigated, while the crops producing lower values per acre show a lower percentage of the total acreage irrigated.

Table 3. Percent of Crops Irrigated, Acres Irrigated, and Acres Harvested, for Selected Crops: 1974

	Percent of crop irrigated	Acres irrigated (1,000)	Acres harvested (1,000)
Farms With Sales of \$2,500 and Over			
Land in orchards.....	62.9	2,547	4,048
Irish potatoes.....	57.6	769	1,334
Small grains.....	57.3	2,707	4,720
Vegetables, sweet corn, or melons for sale.....	52.1	1,601	3,070
Berries for sale.....	52.1	60	114
Cotton.....	30.5	3,699	12,129
Barley.....	18.4	1,340	7,286
Sorghums for all purposes.....	18.2	2,650	14,596
Field seed crops.....	15.8	278	1,759
Hay crops.....	15.1	7,861	52,068
Peanuts for nuts.....	13.2	179	1,359
Tobacco.....	10.6	89	842
Corn for all purposes.....	9.4	6,674	71,220
Wheat.....	5.2	3,236	62,594
Improved pasture.....	4.6	1,760	38,007
Cropland pasture.....	3.4	2,219	65,687
Rye.....	2.1	13	637
Oats.....	1.6	176	11,143
Soybeans for beans.....	1.0	474	47,788
Other crops.....	39.2	1,877	4,782

Irrigated Harvested Cropland as a Percent of Harvested Cropland: 1974
(Farms With Sales of \$2,500 and Over—County Unit Basis)

