Graphic Presentation of Crop & Livestock Adjustments by Production Areas in South Dakota 1924-44

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Graphic Presentation

of

CROP & LIVESTOCK ADJUSTMENTS
BY PRODUCTION AREAS
IN SOUTH DAKOTA

1924-44

Wartime Agricultural Production Areas in South Dakota

Agricultural Economics Pamphlet No. 12
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Agricultural Experiment Station
South Dakota State College
Brookings, South Dakota
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Source of data: South Dakota Crop and Livestock Reporting Service
Introduction

This is a graphic presentation of crop and livestock changes which have occurred in South Dakota during the period, 1924-44. The study of changes which have come about during the past twenty years should be a useful guide in planning adjustments for the transition and post-war periods.

Drought conditions accompanied by low prices during the "thirties" disrupted the crop and livestock pattern. More favorable conditions in recent years have brought about a fuller use of agricultural production facilities in the state. The present war-time level of crop and livestock production will need to be adjusted to new demand conditions. These adjustments should be made to fit the different areas of the state. It is of utmost importance that farmers and ranchers make adjustments which will provide them with the combination of crop and livestock units which will result in a stable and profitable system of farming.

Crop Acres

The acreage planted to the principal crops (corn, sorghum, wheat, oats, barley, rye, flax and all tame hay) in South Dakota during the 20-year period, 1924-43, reached a peak in 1930 and a low point in 1934. Part of the decrease in the acreage may be accounted for by the seeding down to grass of nearly one million acres since 1933. The most important factor in terms of acreage reduction was the large proportion of cropland classed as idle and fallow. This was particularly true for the period 1936-42. The 1943 acreage of idle and fallow in the state was about one million acres compared to 2.5 million acres at the peak reached about 1939. The greatest fluctuations in the planted acreage of the principal crops occurred in Areas VI and VII. Practically no variation occurred in the planted acreage of these crops in Areas I, II and IV during the past twenty-year period.

The state's corn acreage has been greatly reduced since 1933. This has been due chiefly to two factors, namely, (1) Agricultural adjustment programs and (2) drought conditions. Sorghums absorbed the major portion of the reduction in the corn acreage, particularly during the period 1937-42. Corn was expanded at the expense of sorghums in 1943. A major portion of the sorghum acreage increase occurred in Areas IV and V. This has been the area in which a combination of drought conditions and grasshoppers have made corn production extremely hazardous. Greater emphasis on sorghums for both grain and forage needs to be given for the South-central portions of the state.

The wheat acreage in the state increased considerably from 1924 to 1933 and declined to a low point in 1942. The 1943 acreage of wheat was greatly expanded and prospects are for about the same acreage in 1944. However, the wheat acreage will still be well below the 1933 level. A major portion of the wheat is grown in Areas III, VI and VII.
The combined acreage of flax and feed grains (oats, barley and rye) was the highest in the 20-year period during 1942 and 1943. The greatly delayed spring planting season of 1944 is expected to have a considerable effect on the proportion of cropland actually planted to the different crops.

The acreage harvested of total tame hay has been greatly reduced since 1933. This has been due chiefly to drought conditions. The acreage of tame hay, particularly of alfalfa, has been increased only to a small extent in recent years. The 1943 acreage was small and the 1944 and 1945 acreages are expected to be only slightly larger. High protein roughage in the form of alfalfa hay has been a limiting factor in livestock production in recent years. The 1943 state alfalfa acreage was less than 40 percent of that grown during the 10-year average, 1924-33.

Livestock-Feed Ratios

Greatly fluctuating feed production in South Dakota in the past has made it extremely difficult to adjust livestock production to feed supplies. From 1931 to 1937, livestock numbers were generally too high for the feed supplies available in the state. The ratio of feed to livestock numbers has been very favorable since 1937 but is now declining due to high livestock numbers. Unfavorable crop and range conditions could readily result in a shortage of feed for present high levels of livestock on South Dakota farms.

Livestock Numbers

The total number of all cattle on South Dakota farms and ranches January 1, 1944 reached the highest point since 1919. Cattle numbers reached a low point in 1937 and have been increased since then, particularly since 1941. All cattle numbers in the southeastern part of the state have been gradually increased since 1929 and did not show the severe drop in numbers during the depression and drought period as was true for most of the other areas. The most pronounced fluctuations occurred in the three western areas during the past twenty years.

Milk cow numbers have fluctuated relatively little in all areas of the state since 1924. Numbers of milk cows reached a peak in 1934 with present numbers well below this level.

The numbers of sheep and lambs on farms and ranches in South Dakota has shown a phenomenal increase since 1926, particularly in the western area. Numbers reached a peak during 1942 but declined during 1943. The combination of high sheep and cattle numbers makes it necessary to determine the long-time carrying capacity of ranges and pastures in the seven production areas of the state.

Poultry numbers reached an all-time peak in the state on January 1, 1944. In Areas IV and V this peak was reached a year earlier. Less favorable egg-feed price ratios during 1944 will undoubtedly result in a reduction in the numbers of hens kept and poultry raised.

Hog numbers have been gradually increased since 1937 but are still well below the level maintained during the late '20's and early '30's.
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