

Geographic Aspects of Meat Production in Illinois

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The purpose of this paper is to show (1) where the meat animals are produced in Illinois, (2) what the present tendencies are in production, and (3) the reasons for such distribution.

The production of hogs in Illinois is far more important than the combined production of sheep and beef-cattle (Fig. 1). This is partly accounted for by the fact that much of the farm land in Illinois is too expensive for pasture land, consequently more hogs are produced than sheep and beef-cattle, which require more pasture.¹ Mutton and beef also require more feed to produce a unit of human food than does pork.²

DISTRIBUTION

There are comparatively few hogs in the southern one-third and eastern one-half of Illinois, but numbers in the western one-third are as dense as anywhere in the United States. This location of hog raising in Illinois is surprising to those not well acquainted with the state as they ordinarily expect large numbers of hogs to be found in the heavy grain producing prairie sections of central and eastern Illinois.

The geographic distribution of swine in the United States is primarily determined by the distribution of corn.³ There are, however, several interesting discrepancies between the distribution of swine and corn. Illinois shows one of those discrepancies.

The greatest center of corn production is in east central Illinois, yet comparatively few swine are raised there, principally because of the high price of corn and the small amount of clover grown. The farm price of corn in east central Illinois averages a few cents per bushel higher than in western Illinois, owing in part to the nearness to the Chicago market where a large amount of corn is made into glucose, shipped to other parts of the United States, or exported to other countries. The freight rates to Chicago on corn from points in western Illinois are enough higher than from nearby points in east central Illinois to make the feeding of corn to hogs and the shipment of the hogs to Chicago more profitable than the shipment of corn. Pork is worth several times as much per pound as corn, furthermore it represents only about one-fifth of the weight of corn, and hence can bear better the cost of trans-

¹ Rusk, H. P. *Rept. Ill. Farmers' Inst.*, Vol. 20, 1915, p. 112.

² Baker, O. E. *Graphic Summary of Am. Agr. Misc. Pub.* 105, U. S. D. A., p. 96.

³ Finch, V. C., and Baker, O. E., *Geog. of the World's Agr.* U. S. D. A., p. 130.

portation. In western Illinois also more clover and other kinds of hay are grown, owing in part to soil and topographic adaptation. These combined with corn make a more complete feed than corn alone.

The distribution of beef-cattle and sheep in Illinois is more uniform than that of hogs, but, again the concentration is greater in the north-west and west than in the south, and for the same reason as for swine.

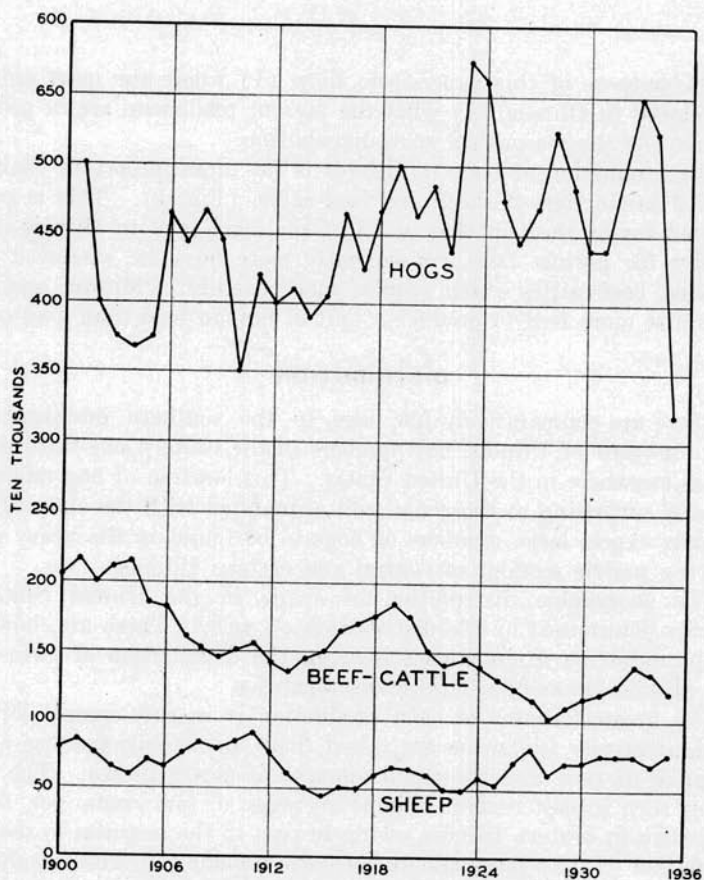


Fig. 1.—GRAPH SHOWING PRODUCTION OF HOGS, BEEF-CATTLE, AND SHEEP IN ILLINOIS.

TRENDS

The general trend of hog production in Illinois from 1900 to 1935 has been upward (Fig. 1). There are sudden and sharp fluctuations in this period, but each high mark exceeded the previous high, with but one exception, the post-war high of 1923. The 1933 peak, however, was only

4 per cent below the 1923 peak. From 1931 to 1933 hog population increased rapidly until the Hog Control Program of the federal government made a drastic curtailment in production, the 1935 crop being more than 50 per cent below the 1933 crop, and the lowest since 1910.

The number of beef-cattle in the state has steadily declined since 1904 (Fig. 1). The increase during the war period was only a temporary condition, for the downward trend set in again in 1920, and production reached its lowest mark in 1928. Since then there has been a slight upward rally until 1934 and 1935 when numbers were greatly reduced by the severe drought of 1933 and the consequent feed shortage. The general decline in production in the early part of the century is due to a change in the complexion of the cattle industry,⁴ a change from what was formerly, practically a breeding and rearing proposition to one that is almost a purely finishing proposition. The post-war decline in number is due to an improvement in the livestock, quality replacing quantity. Science has improved the animal industry so that there is greater productivity per animal.⁵ The recent upward trend in both the hog and beef-cattle industry is probably due to the fact that the use of the tractor and the automobile has caused a decline since the World War in the number of horses and mules, with the resultant release of a large number of acres of crops to feed to other farm animals.⁶

The sheep industry in Illinois has declined since 1900. Diversified farming, the growth of dairy interests around large urban centers, and the growth of grain farming have pushed sheep off to more remote grazing grounds.⁷ The sheep industry is an extensive type of agriculture, and tends to disappear from regions of dense population and expensive land. Internal parasites, predatory dogs, and the method of farm tenantry in Illinois further discouraged the sheep industry.⁸ The increase in the sheep industry since 1928 is due to the marked increase in wool prices. Prices advanced sharply in 1933 to a point well above the pre-war price. Sheep numbers in most of the important sheep-producing countries are now declining, following five years of expansion. Drought in 1933 in several countries of the southern hemisphere foreshadows a further decline. World prices as well as the prices in the United States advanced.⁹ The increased prices of sheep products plus the low price of grain warranted the increased production in sheep, whereas production of both hog and beef-cattle decreased.

⁴ Rusk, H. P., *Rept. Illinois Farmers' Inst.* Vol. 20, 1915, p. 112.

⁵ Wallace, Henry A., *Yrbk. of Agr.* 1934, U. S. D. A., p. 26.

⁶ Baker, O. E., *Graphic Summary of Am. Agr.* Misc. Pub. 105, U. S. D. A., p. 1.

⁷ Finch, V. C., and Baker, O. E., *Geog. of World's Agr.* U. S. D. A., p. 135.

⁸ Coffey, W. E., *Rept. Ill. Farmers' Inst.* Vol. 20, 1915, p. 117.

⁹ Bean, Louis H., and Chew, Arthur P., *Yrbk. of Agr.*, 1934, U. S. D. A., p. 121.

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5. *Report Illinois Farmers' Institute*, Vol. 20, 1915.
6. *Yearbooks of Agriculture*, U. S. D. A.