



AGRICULTURAL NEWS OF THE WEEK

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF DALLAS

Number 186

Wednesday, July 22, 1953

W H E A T

The Secretary of Agriculture announced last week that the national wheat acreage allotment for 1954 will be 62,000,000 acres. This compares with 77,500,000 acres planted for the 1953 crop. The reduction is made, says the Secretary, because this year's total supply of wheat will far exceed domestic and export demands.

The Secretary has fixed August 14 as the date for a nationwide referendum to determine whether or not farmers will accept wheat marketing quotas. Present legislation provides that, if producers accept marketing quotas, the wheat crop will be supported at 90 percent of parity. On the other hand, if producers reject quotas, they will be eligible for price support at only 50 percent of parity. At least two-thirds of the farmers voting in the referendum must approve the controls for them to become effective.

The new acreage allotment will be apportioned among the states, and the state allotments among the counties, on the basis of the acreage seeded for the production of wheat during the preceding 10 years, with adjustments for abnormal weather and for trends in acreage.

Acreage allotments will be in effect whether or not quotas are approved. But only those farmers who plant within their allotments are eligible for price support assistance.

Spot wheat prices made significant gains last week. No. 1 hard wheat closed on the Fort Worth market on July 17 at \$2.43 1/4 per bushel, compared with \$2.35 3/4 one week earlier.

C O T T O N

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics in Austin reports this week that irrigated cotton in northwest Texas is beginning to bloom. Dry-land prospects in this part of the State remain poor, however, with more moisture needed to prevent additional abandonment of acreage. In the counties along the Upper Coast the crop is maturing fast, and ginning has started in some counties. Hot, dry weather has caused bolls to open prematurely in the Coastal Bend and south Texas. Growers in the Lower Valley have made excellent progress in harvesting a short crop.

Domestic mill consumption of cotton in June averaged 37,100 bales per working day, according to the Bureau of the Census. This is slightly less than the comparable figure for May but is substantially above the 34,800 bales per day reported in June 1952.

In the first 11 months of the current season, mills consumed 8.7 million bales, compared with 8.4 million in the August-June period last year. Domestic consumption for the season ending July 31 probably will total close to 9.5 million bales, compared with 9.2 million in 1951-52 and 10.5 million in 1950-51.

Spot cotton prices are fluctuating within a very narrow range, and current market quotations are not greatly different from those of a week or 2 weeks ago.

L I V E S T O C K

Livestock prices rose sharply last week after a long period of decline. The factors contributing to this advance include the Government's drought-aid program, a pickup in demand for stockers and feeders, a rise in consumption of

meat following earlier price declines, and the rains which fell over many parts of the Southwest.

Good and Choice slaughter steers and yearlings sold in Fort Worth last week at prices ranging up to \$23.50 per cwt. Fat calves of Good and Choice grades sold up to \$20.00, while fat cows drew as high as \$15.00.

Good and Choice fat lambs joined the advance at Fort Worth last week and brought prices ranging up to \$23.50, while stocker and feeder lambs sold as high as \$17.00.

Hog prices on the Fort Worth market hit a new 5-year high of \$27.00 per cwt. about midweek but closed out the week at about \$26.50.

The number of cattle on feed July 1 in the 11 Corn Belt states is estimated to be 8 percent larger than the number on feed a year earlier, according to the BAE. This is the largest number on feed on July 1 for the postwar years. Considering the information available on several important states outside the Corn Belt, says the BAE, it appears that the number of cattle on feed July 1 for the country as a whole was up 4 to 5 percent from a year ago.

DROUGHT FEED PROGRAM

The Department of Agriculture has issued a statement intended to clarify the basis of farmers' and stockmen's eligibility for Government-owned feeds under its drought feed program.

The purpose of the drought feed program, says the Department, is to maintain basic foundation herds for those bona fide farmers and stockmen who do not have finances to purchase feed at prevailing market prices to maintain such herds and remain in the livestock business with a reasonable chance for successful operations. Operators of commercial feed lots are not eligible for assistance under the program.

More specifically, to be eligible for feed at reduced prices, a farmer or stockman must, first, have less than a 30-day supply of feed to maintain his foundation herd and, second, farmers and ranchers must not have the financial ability to remain in business and satisfactorily maintain their herds unless they can purchase feed at prices substantially below the prevailing market price.

FARM WAGES

Farm wage rates in the Nation around July 1 were about 1 1/2 percent higher than the year earlier, according to the BAE.

Louisiana, Arizona, and New Mexico showed slight increases in average farm wage rates on July 1, as compared with a year earlier.

Probably because of the effect of the drought on demand for farm labor, farm wage rates in Texas and Oklahoma on July 1 averaged slightly lower than a year ago. A spot check in Texas shows, for example, that the average farm wage rate per day, without board or room, on July 1 of this year was \$5.70, compared with \$5.90 a year ago. Where workers were employed by the hour the comparable hourly wage was 65 cents, compared with 68 cents last year.

MISCELLANEOUS

Broiler markets in Texas were mostly steady last week. Broilers or fryers weighing from 2 1/2 to 3 pounds generally brought from 29 to 30 cents per pound.

Two cars of Choice 12-month Texas wool, Good French combing and staple length, sold locally last week at \$1.80 per pound, clean basis, according to PMA.

On the farmers' market in Dallas this week, good quality tomatoes sold for \$4.50 to \$5.00 per bushel. Texas watermelons were quoted at 2 to 3 cents per pound. Elberta peaches of good quality and size are bringing \$3.75 to \$4.00.

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