

State's Productive Capacity

California's agricultural productive capacity attainable in 1955 projected from findings of federal-state survey

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The following article is the first of a series of reports based on a study of California's agricultural productive capacity, that can be attained by 1955, which was conducted by the California State Committee on Survey of Agricultural Productive Capacity. The Committee included representatives of the University of California, the United States Department of Agriculture, and State agencies.

California's productive capacity can be increased considerably but any substantial increase must come largely from greater efficiency in production rather than from additional land resources. The estimated expansion of acreage in harvested crops between 1950 and 1955 is placed at 3% or 4% only.

Projections for agricultural productivity in 1955 assume favorable farm prices and adequate supplies of production materials, but a somewhat smaller farm labor force. Improved farming practices and new technology are expected to be available and more widely used as higher levels of production—to be attainable—must be profitable to farmers.

Projections for 1955 represent a more intensive use of cropland than in 1950—when acreage limitations existed in cotton and rice—but less intensity than in 1951—cotton and rice were over-expanded in terms of sustained land use and sound management policies.

Considerable readjustments are indicated from the 1951 situation if trends toward more livestock production are to be realized. The indicated shifts are from cash crops into feed grains, hay and pasture.

Projected Shifts in Acreage for Selected Crops*

	Thousand acres		
	Estimated for 1950	1951	Projected 1955
Cotton	586	1,341	1,250
Rice	240	319	250
Dry edible beans	319	339	320
Sugar beets	218	149	175
Potatoes	123	84	90
Canning tomatoes	76	145	120
Feed grains	3,617	3,196	3,465
Hay and (crop) pasture	2,024	1,917	2,245
Fruits and nuts	2,246	2,275	2,294

* Estimated crop acreages, revised in line with 1950 census results, were not available at the time this study was made.

Projections for sugar beets represent a needed readjustment from 1951 when acreage declined due to unfavorable weather in the 1950 harvest.

The 1951 bean acreage was above average due partly to inability of farmers to plant intended acreage of other crops.

Potato acreage was cut back too sharply in 1951, in reaction to over-expansion in 1950.

The 1951 acreage of canning tomatoes was overexpanded in terms of probable future market demand.

The 1951 acreage of feed grains, hay and pasture were all too low in view of an expanding livestock industry.

The acreage of fruits and nuts can not be expanded quickly and no large expansion appears warranted.

Improved production techniques will lead to significantly higher yields per acre of certain field crops. The projected increase in 1955—over 1950—will be 15% for cotton, 15% for ladino seed, 10% for early potatoes, 9% for sugar beets and 3% for alfalfa hay.

No new technology is in prospect to raise significantly yields of cereals, dry edible beans, late potatoes, flaxseed, and the minor hay crops.

Castor beans and safflower are so new to California that little is known about their possibilities and future yields were not projected.

Marketable production of most vegetables and fruits could be increased on present acreages by harvesting and marketing a larger proportion of the tonnage now produced.

Among the vegetable crops, only carrots are likely to experience higher yields—from use of pelleted seed, greater plant populations per acre, and improved marketing techniques.

Somewhat higher yields per acre of prunes can be expected by pulling out marginal acreage and old orchards.

Higher average yields of almond and walnuts will result from shift in acreage to more productive areas.

Open permanent pasture and range in farms represent more than 40% of the total grazing in California. On the 18 million acres of this land a highly significant increase in grazing—from 0.55 to 0.60 animal unit months per acre—can be expected by 1955. Although that increase is small compared with the maximum potential improvement, the improved range management practices needed to attain the potential are difficult

to accomplish. Such practices, not equally applicable to all lands, include rotation grazing, reseeding, water development, and fertilization. About one seventh of California's grazing capacity is on public and private range not in farms. While such range also has great possibilities of improvement, not much progress can be expected by 1955.

About one fifth of California's total grazing capacity is on irrigated pastures and another fifth represents crop residues of various kinds. The average grazing capacity on irrigated pasture is expected to increase from 8.0 to 9.0 animal unit months per acre. No increases in production of crop residues are projected, as only a fraction of such potential feed is now utilized.

California's livestock production is partially dependent upon feed grains and concentrates shipped in from other states. It is estimated that some 36% of the grain requirements in 1950 were imported. According to 1955 projections this proportion would increase to 50%.

The 1955 projected production of feed grains is some 9% below 1950. Thus even

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