

SUGAR-BEET INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES

ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUGAR-BEET INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES

In 1926, sugar beets were harvested from 687,000 acres in the United States. The leading States in the production of sugar beets are Colorado, Michigan, Utah, Nebraska, California, Idaho, and Ohio. The beet-growing territory of the country is naturally divided by somewhat distinct cultural conditions into three sections—the Central State region, containing approximately 30 per cent of the total acreage; the Mountain State region, containing about 60 per cent; and the California area, containing 10 per cent. The Central State region is almost entirely dependent upon rainfall for moisture, while the larger part of the crop that is grown in the western region is provided with irrigation. The total acreage of sugar beets harvested in the United States has increased from 530,000 acres in 1922 to 687,000 acres in 1926. During the same period exceptionally bad weather and the spread of diseases, were influential in causing a decrease in the acreage planted to sugar cane in continental United States from 241,000 acres to 160,000 acres, so that the acreage in sugar cane is now less than one-fourth that in sugar beets. A more definite idea of the extent of the crop may be obtained by comparing it with other crops that are similar in acreage and in value. Sugar beets occupy about the same acreage as buckwheat, rice, sweet potatoes, or peanuts. A simple comparison of acreage, however, does not afford an adequate measure of the relative importance of the crop. Because of its high value per acre (\$72 per acre harvested in 1925) the farm value of the sugar-beet crop, amounting to \$47,000,000 in 1925, approximated that of the flaxseed crop, although over 3,000,000 acres were devoted to the latter. Sugar-beet acreage equaled in 1925 about 1½ per cent of the wheat acreage but the farm value of the crop equaled about 5 per cent of that of the wheat crop.

In Table 1 there is shown the acreage of sugar beets planted and harvested in the principal producing States and in the United States as a whole during the period 1921–1926. Throughout this period the largest acreage in any of the Western States was harvested in Colorado and the largest acreage in the eastern producing region in Michigan. Although there was considerable fluctuation annually in the quantity of sugar beets harvested in the individual States, with the exception of one year the quantity harvested in the United States was remarkably uniform, varying from 7,400,000 to 7,800,000 short tons. The total farm value of the United States sugar-beet crop during these six years varied from \$41,000,000 to \$63,000,000 annually,