

REPORT ON THE FARMERS' COSTS OF PRODUCTION OF SUGAR
BEETS IN THE UNITED STATES FOR THE YEARS 1921, 1922, AND
1923

HISTORY OF THE INVESTIGATION

On December 19, 1922, two months after the tariff act of 1922 became effective, the Mountain States Beet Growers' Association, representing the sugar-beet producers of Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming, made formal request to the Tariff Commission for an investigation of the costs, returns, and economic conditions in the sugar-beet industry. Their request was vigorously supported by the sugar-beet producers of other States.

Because of the significance of sugar-beet production in the sugar industry of the United States, the commission, on August 7, 1923, voted:

* * * that an investigation under the general powers of the commission is hereby instituted on the cost of production of sugar beets; that the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture in such investigation is invited; and that the advisory board be directed to draft a plan for the conduct of the investigation, if practicable, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture.

In accordance with this action the advisory board submitted plans for the investigation which were approved by the commission on August 14, 1923, and this report represents in part the results of that investigation.

The direct field investigation of farm costs was begun on September 4, 1923, at Owosso, Mich., and was completed at Santa Ana, Calif., four months later, January 4, 1924. The investigation has required about 4,200 days of man labor, 1,270 days of field work in collecting the data from the farmers, and 2,930 days devoted to calculations and tabulations. In all, 78 persons, excluding the farmers who gave information on their costs and returns, have taken part in the investigation—20 in the field and 58 in the office. The 20 field agents traveled a total of about 86,000 miles by train and in the course of the investigation covered thoroughly by automobile the sugar-beet producing districts in the nine States investigated.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

The survey method was used in this investigation, that being a generally accepted and appropriate method of obtaining the production costs of an agricultural product. Trained agriculturists and cost accountants familiar with agricultural costs and farm practice in producing sugar beets and supplied with cost schedules,⁷ visited the growers on their farms and there obtained the necessary data for determining costs.

Detailed data for 1922.—At the time the investigation was ordered the greater part of the 1923 crop of sugar beets had not been harvested. Since the commission desired data for the most recently harvested crop, detailed costs were obtained for the 1922 production.

⁷ See appendix for form of schedule used.