

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD -----	3
SOILS -----	4
CLIMATE -----	6
RAINFALL -----	8
TYPE-OF-FARMING AREAS -----	10
SELECTING A FARM -----	15
Good Productive Soil -----	16
Topography -----	16
Buildings and Improvements -----	16
Size of Business -----	17
Use of Land -----	17
Shape and Size of Fields -----	17
Terracing and Drainage -----	17
Labor-Saving Machinery -----	18
Markets and Roads -----	18
Churches, Schools, and Other Public Services -----	18
Part-time Industrial Employment -----	18
Legal Safeguards -----	19
FARM LAND PRICES -----	19
OTHER INFORMATION -----	21
Soil Conservation Districts -----	22
County and Home Demonstration Agents -----	22

Opportunities for Farming in South Carolina

Factors to Consider in Selecting A Farm*

Agricultural Economics Extension Work

FOREWORD

South Carolina has a land area of 19,395,200 acres, according to the 1950 Census of Agriculture. Of this area, 61.2 percent is in farms. Of the 11,878,793 acres in farms, 5,385,990 acres, or 45.3 percent, are classed as cropland and 46.8 percent is classed as farm woodland.

The average size of farm was 85.2 acres in 1950. The average value of land and buildings per farm was \$5,648.

The opportunities for farming and making a satisfactory living on South Carolina farms are good. For some persons there are opportunities for buying a farm and making farming a full-time occupation. For others there are opportunities to live in the country and work on a part-time basis at a nonfarm job. For others there is the opportunity for one or more members of the family to work off the farm at a full-time job. For still others there may be different combinations which will enable them to live in the country and/or farm. The farm or place selected should fit the needs of the particular family whether it be for farming or for living in the country.

For many farm families the decision to buy a farm is perhaps the most important one they will ever make in their lifetimes. The high costs for farm lands, buildings, machinery and equipment, livestock, and other items of investment make it very important

* Replaces Extension Circular 279, Selecting A Farm in South Carolina.

that farmers avoid serious errors in selecting a farm. It is highly important that they find the place where they can most efficiently use their ability, experience, time, and money to achieve maximum incomes consistent with good farm management and conservation practices.

Farming is a combination of both the home and business. However, not all farmers have the same thing in mind when they rent or buy a farm. Some are interested in a specific type of farming such as tobacco, dairying, beef cattle production, or peach or truck farming. Others may want only a small place on which to live and farm on a part-time basis.

SOILS

South Carolina extends from the mountains to the seashore. It is bounded on the north by North Carolina and on the west by the Savannah River, which separates the state from Georgia. The topography varies from generally flat in the southern part of the state to undulating, rolling, and hilly in the northwestern portion.

The soils of the state belong to the Brown Forest and the Red and Yellow Forest soil groups. In South Carolina the Brown Forest soils are found only in a narrow band along the extreme northwestern border. Collectively these soils make up what is referred to as the Appalachian Mountain Province of South Carolina.

The Red and Yellow Forest great soil group makes up more than 90 percent of the state. In South Carolina this group may be divided into three provinces or areas of similar soils, namely, the Piedmont Plateau Province, the Coastal Plain Province, and the River Flood Plains Province.

The soils of the state have been classified into four soil provinces, namely, the Appalachian Mountain, the Piedmont Plateau, the Atlantic Coastal Plain, and the River Flood Plains (Figure 1).

Within these four provinces there are local areas where other soils may be found. For example, in the Sandhills both large and small areas of typical Upper Coastal Plain soils may be found.

The areas of the soils of the River Flood Plains Province compose those soils that have been deposited by stream water. These soils are found in every county of the state, but the areas are in most cases too small to show on the map of the scale employed. The four soil provinces have been divided into the Piedmont soil series which are divided into types.*

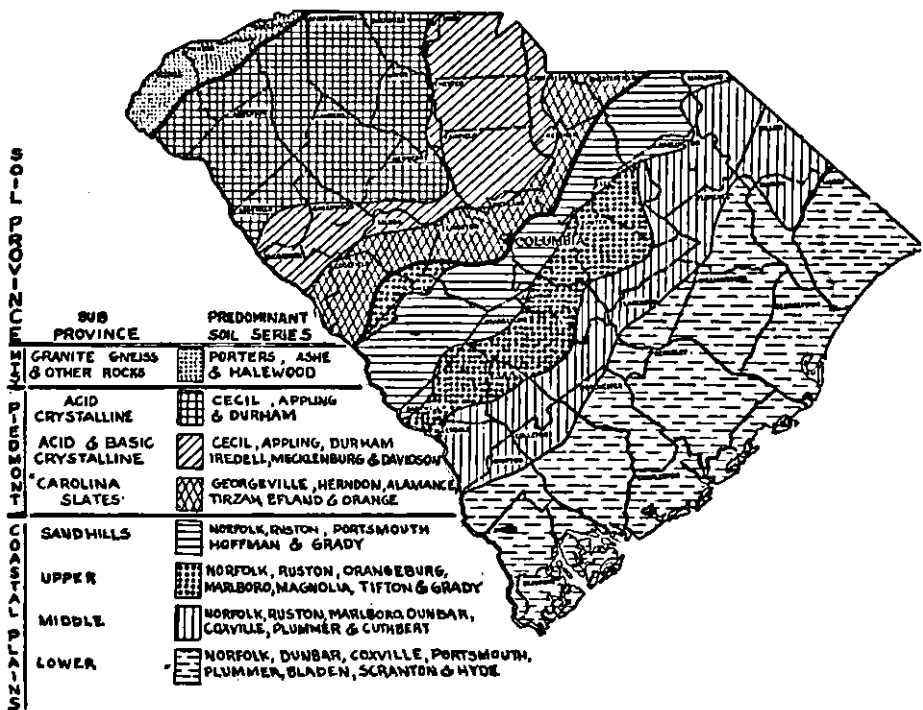


Figure 1.—The major soil provinces and predominant soil series in South Carolina.

* For more complete information relating to soils of South Carolina, see Extension Bulletin 104, Agronomy Handbook for South Carolina, 1952.

CLIMATE

South Carolina extends from the mountains in the northwest to the seashore on the southeast. There is wide variation in the climate between these areas. The growing season varies from about 190 days in the extreme northwestern part of the state to 290 days for a small area along the Atlantic Seacoast (Figure 2).

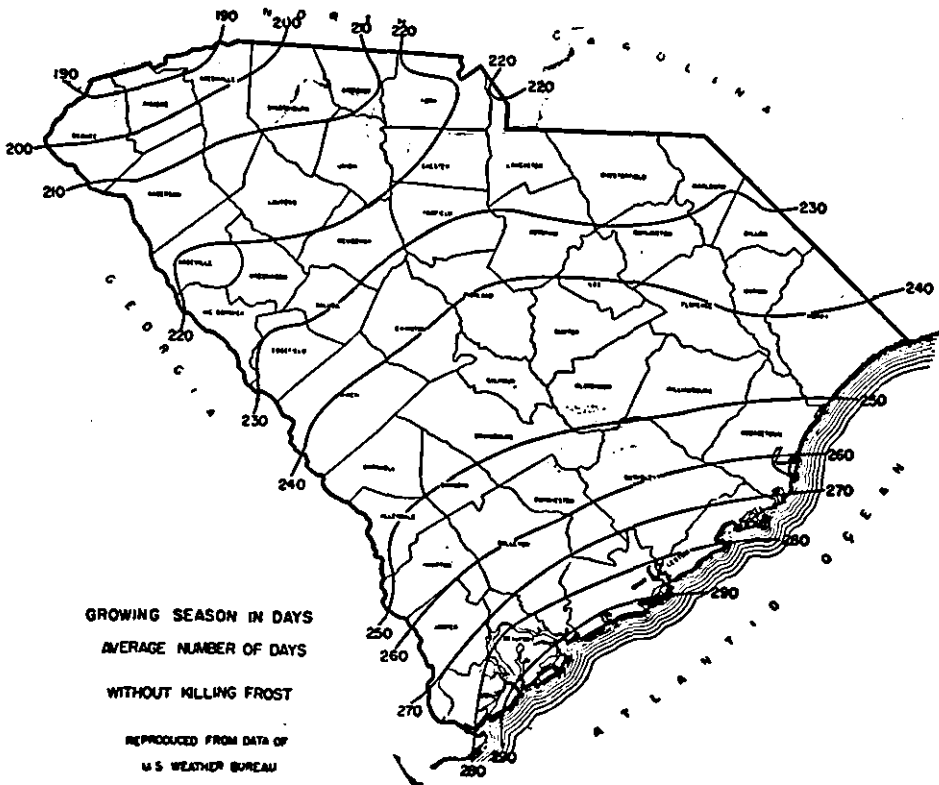


Figure 2

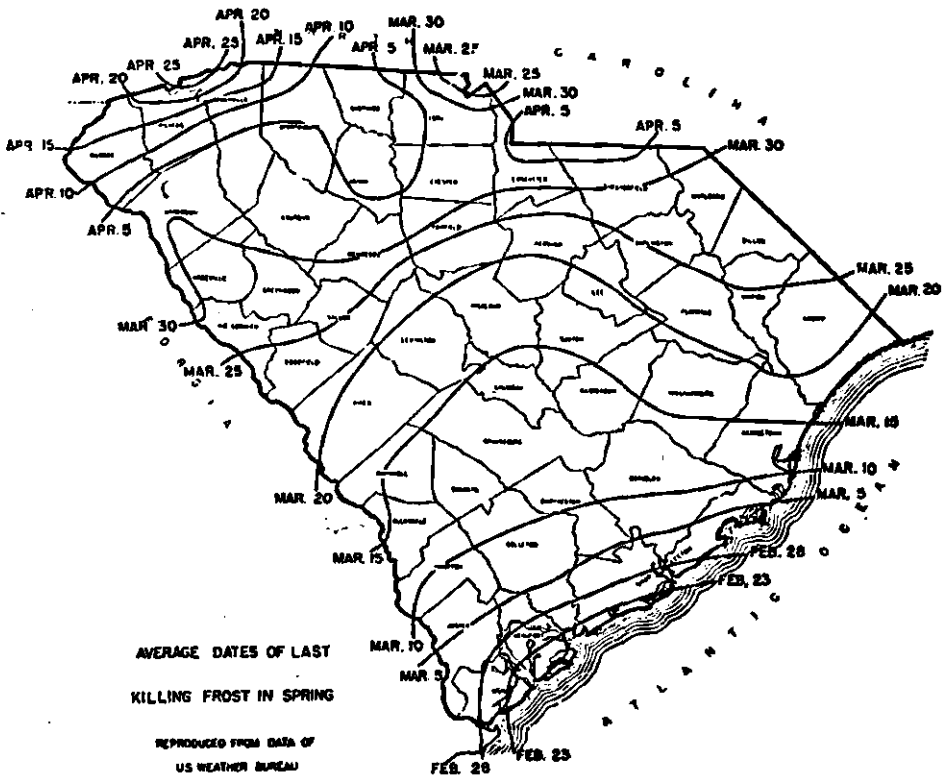


Figure 3

The limiting factor in the production of most field crops is not generally the length of the growing season. For the production of early truck crops, Irish potatoes, and fruits, the average dates of the last killing frost in the spring are particularly important. (Figure 3). These dates may determine whether a farmer may plant a crop early enough to enable him to market it during a period when competition is not so great from other states. The average dates of the first killing frost in the fall are similarly important for the growers of fall truck crops, sweet potatoes, and other crops likely to be damaged by frost (Figure 4).

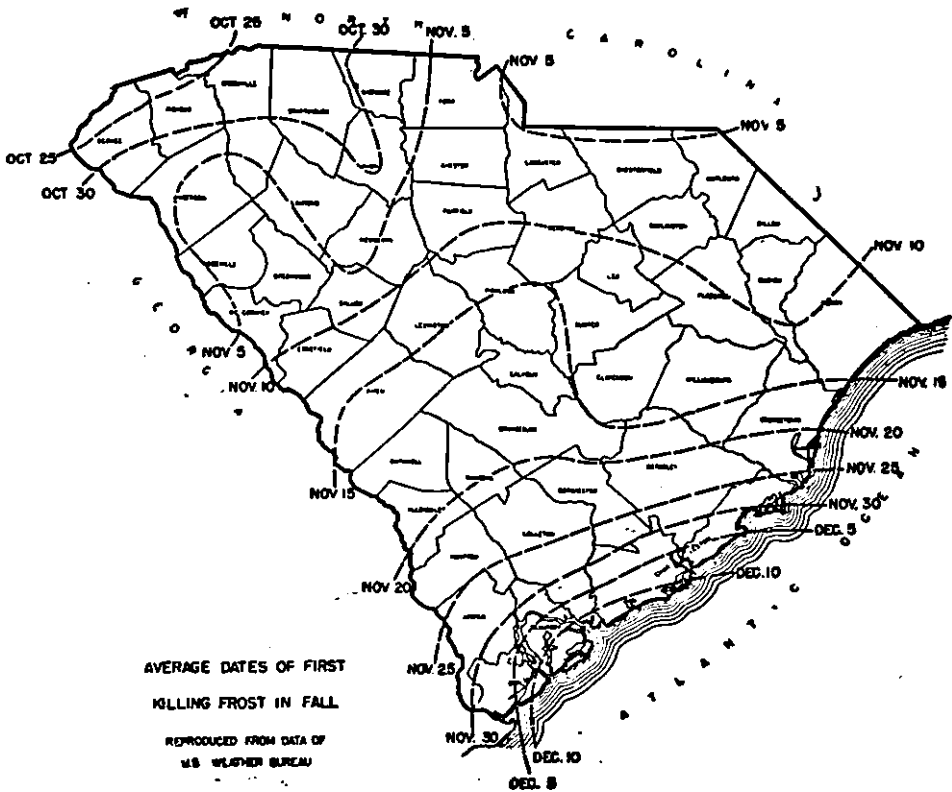


Figure 4

RAINFALL

The total annual rainfall averages about 48 inches. The lowest rainfall occurs in the lower Piedmont and in the Sandhills (Figure 5). The distribution of rainfall is the limiting factor for the production of certain crops, such as corn, which require considerable moisture during the summer growing season. This is particularly true for some counties in the lower Piedmont where a considerably smaller proportion of the rainfall occurs during the crop-growing season (Figure 6). Because of the nature of the soils in this area to retain moisture, they have been termed "late," and they do not usually dry out rapidly in the spring. Cotton produc-

tion under boll weevil conditions is generally hazardous in this area. On the other hand, small grains and grasses generally thrive under such conditions.

More important than the total average rainfall is its distribution throughout the crop production period. The monthly average rainfall is lowest in October and November, increases in the winter, is lower in the spring, and is heaviest in July and August. The seasonable distribution of rainfall is generally favorable for cotton production.

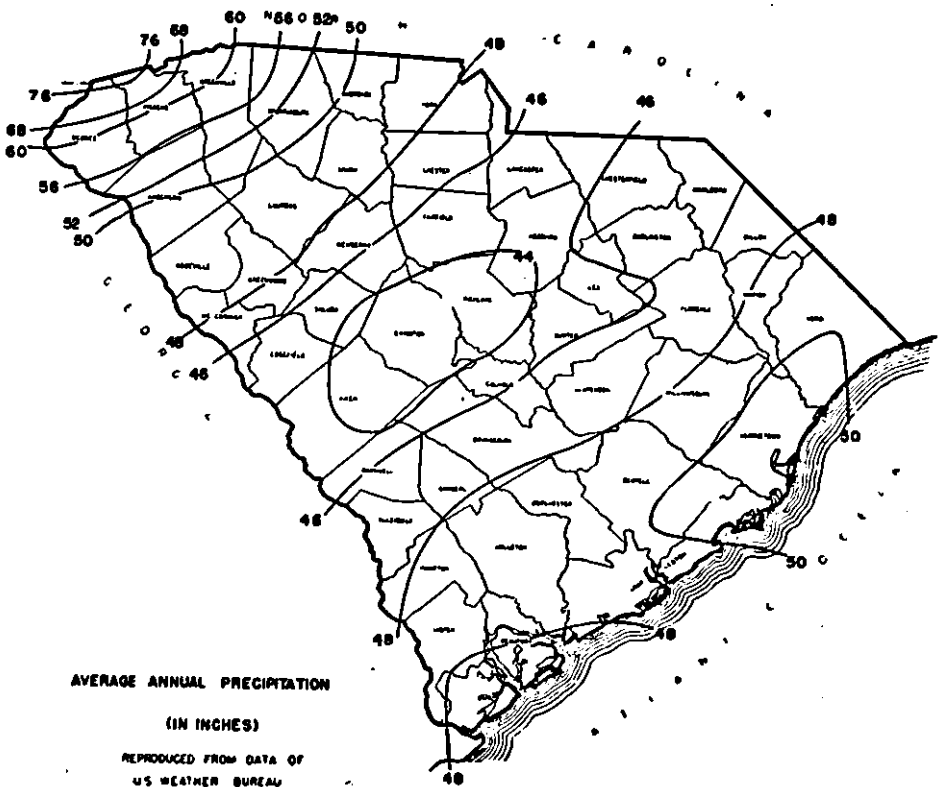


Figure 5

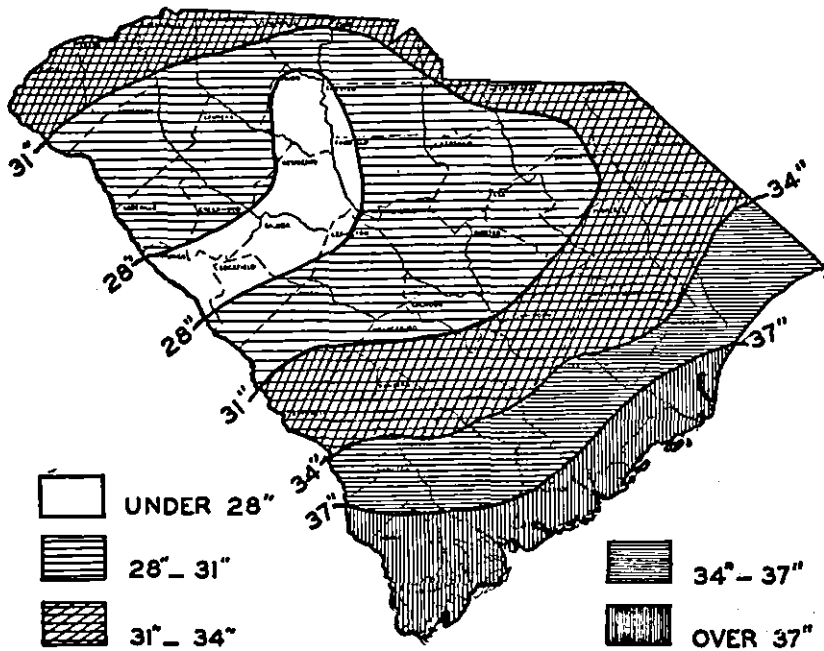


Figure 6.—Mean precipitation for the crop-growing season.

TYPE-OF-FARMING AREAS

There are eight major type-of-farming areas in the state (Figure 7). Although certain crop and livestock enterprises are predominant in the various areas, there may be smaller areas in which other crop and livestock enterprises are important. Furthermore, some of the enterprises listed in certain type-of-farming areas may be found only in local areas, and therefore may not be important for the area as a whole.

The agriculture of any particular area is the outgrowth of the practical experiences of successful farmers over a long period of time. The agricultural pattern in this state is rapidly changing. Important changes are being brought about by such developments as mechanization, irrigation, the shift to more grassland farming

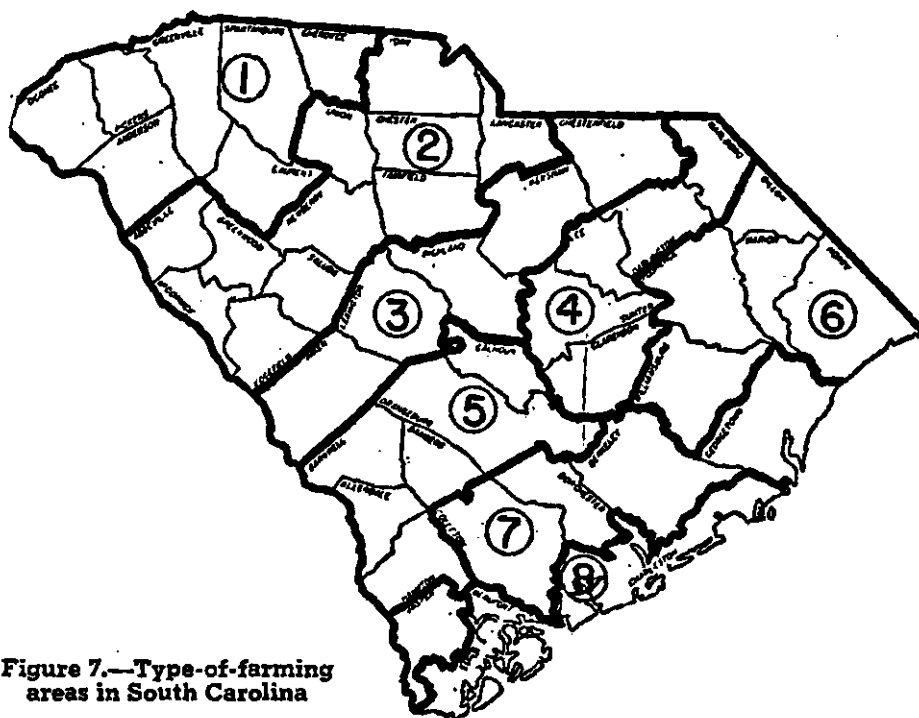


Figure 7.—Type-of-farming areas in South Carolina

- Area 1.—Upper Piedmont**
(Cotton, peaches, apples, dairying, beef cattle, poultry and turkeys)
- Area 2.—Lower Piedmont**
(Cotton, dairying, beef cattle, peaches, poultry and turkeys, and forestry products)
- Area 3.—Sandhills**
(Cotton, peanuts, peaches, truck crops, poultry and turkeys, dairying, and beef cattle in local areas)
- Area 4.—Upper Coastal Plain**
(Cotton, sweet potatoes, peanuts, flue-cured tobacco, soybeans, dairying, beef cattle, hogs, poultry and turkeys)
- Area 5.—Upper Coastal Plain**
(Cotton, sweet potatoes, soybeans, hogs, dairying, beef cattle, poultry and turkeys, watermelons, cantaloupes, cucumbers, and peanuts)
- Area 6.—Lower Coastal Plain**
(Cotton, flue-cured tobacco, sweet potatoes, other truck crops, hogs, beef cattle, dairying, poultry and turkeys)
- Area 7.—Lower Coastal Plain**
(Cotton, hogs, flue-cured tobacco, beef cattle, dairying, poultry and turkeys, sweet potatoes and other truck crops)
- Area 8.—Truck Crops Area**
(Irish potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, string beans and other truck crops, beef cattle, dairying, and poultry and turkeys)

Note: The sale of forestry products is significant in most type-of-farming areas.

12 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMING IN SOUTH CAROLINA

and cattle, more effective disease and insect control measures, improved varieties of crops, improved breeds of livestock, and improved farming practices. The rapid industrialization of the state, together with the developments in connection with the defense program, is an important factor which is accelerating these changes in agriculture.

Table 1.—Size of Farm, Cropland Harvested, and Proportion of Cropland Harvested in Specified Crops, by Type-of-Farming Areas, 1949

Item	Type-of-Farming Areas								State
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Average size of farms									
Acres:	68.0	106.6	102.0	72.3	124.6	59.1	97.1	95.6	85.2
Cropland harvested									
Acres:	24.0	26.4	31.8	36.4	50.6	21.7	20.6	16.5	28.4
Cropland used for pasture									
Acres:	2.6	7.1	4.5	1.6	5.2	1.0	3.3	7.3	3.5
Total pasture									
Acres:	14.8	29.9	15.7	5.4	15.7	5.8	24.8	29.2	15.7
Proportion of Cropland Harvested in:									
Cotton	30.8	28.5	32.5	42.4	30.9	23.0	21.2	4.8	30.2
Tobacco, flue-cured	*	*	0.3	3.4	0.1	13.6	2.2	*	2.7
Corn	25.3	28.6	34.7	29.4	38.3	43.2	54.0	34.5	34.1
Oats	16.7	18.0	12.8	13.8	12.9	8.6	7.2	6.4	13.5
Barley	1.5	0.6	0.1	*	*	*	*	0.1	0.4
Wheat	8.6	4.3	3.1	2.5	1.3	1.0	0.1	0.3	3.4
Sweet potatoes	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	1.3	1.8	2.0	2.3	0.9
All hay	15.3	18.4	7.3	5.6	2.4	7.7	6.4	4.5	9.4

* Less than 0.1 percent

Compiled from U. S. Census of Agriculture for South Carolina, 1950

Approximately 47 percent of the farm land in South Carolina was in woodland in 1949, according to the 1950 Census of Agriculture. The proportion of farm land in woods varied considerably from county to county and from farm to farm. In addition to being a source of fuel, farm woodlands on most farms are a source of fence posts, lumber for farm use, and a source of cash income through the sale of logs, poles, pulpwood, etc.

Cotton occupies about 30 percent of the cropland harvested and is the most important cash crop in the state (Table 1). However, the cash income from flue-cured tobacco and the sale of livestock and livestock products have been stepped up considerably during the past decade. In terms of cash income, the sale of flue-cured tobacco ranks second to cotton. In third place is the income from the sale of livestock and livestock products.

The increase in the income from the sale of livestock and livestock products since 1940 has been very rapid. For example, in 1951 the income from the sale of livestock and livestock products was almost five times that of 1940. On a percentage basis the increases have been greatest for turkeys, poultry and eggs, hogs, and beef cattle. Although higher prices for these classes of livestock and eggs account for the stepping up of the income from these sources, the production of more feeds and grazing crops of a temporary and permanent nature has enabled greater production of these products. The number of the various classes of livestock per 100 acres of cropland in 1950 is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.—Number of Livestock per 100 Acres of Cropland,
by Type-of-Farming Areas, 1950**

Class of Livestock	Type-of-Farming Areas								State
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	Number per 100 Acres of Cropland								
Horses and mules	4.6	4.7	3.5	3.8	3.0	5.9	5.4	5.8	4.3
All cattle and calves	12.0	16.8	8.2	4.2	5.9	5.2	14.4	26.2	9.3
Milk cows	5.3	6.3	3.2	1.7	2.2	2.1	4.0	4.6	3.6
Hogs and pigs	7.2	9.1	12.7	13.8	18.0	23.0	35.2	26.2	15.1
Chickens— four months old	123.9	109.5	87.2	54.8	47.5	101.6	110.6	128.7	89.7
Turkeys— four months old	1.7	4.3	1.4	0.3	0.5	0.6	2.7	1.6	1.5
Turkeys—raised	9.8	46.0	12.7	6.4	11.1	6.0	17.0	20.2	15.4

Compiled from U. S. Census of Agriculture for South Carolina, 1950.

Corn occupies more acres than any other cultivated crop. It is the chief source of feed grains. The Coastal Plain area is particularly adapted to corn production. Although corn is an important source of feed in the Piedmont area, oats and barley are also important sources of feed grains.

Peach production for commercial purposes is centered largely in the Piedmont and in local areas in the Sandhills. Spartanburg county is the peach center of the state. Commercial peach production is also located in counties adjoining Spartanburg and in nearby counties of York and Chester, in the Ridge section of Saluda and Edgefield counties, and in certain Sandhills counties and other smaller areas throughout the state.

Commercial apple production is localized mainly in the northern portion of the upper tier of Piedmont counties.

In Richland and Lexington counties considerable market gardening is conducted to supply the demand for such products on the Columbia market. Similar markets are available for truck crops in certain counties. The wholesale markets in Columbia and Greenville furnish a good market for commercial truck crops, fruits, and other farm products grown in the state.

The production of cucumbers, cantaloupes, and watermelons constitutes an important source of income in area 5. This is in addition to the usual sources of income from cotton, peanuts, and sweet potatoes. Peanut production also extends northward into Aiken county and is of some importance in Sumter, Lee, Florence, and other counties in this vicinity.

The growing of hogs for commercial purposes is relatively more important in the Coastal Plain than in other areas throughout the state. However, hogs are produced for commercial purposes in all areas of the state.

The production of Grade A milk is relatively important throughout the state. Generally, the demand for milk in the cities throughout the state is supplied from nearby adjacent areas. For certain cities in the Coastal Plain, some milk is imported during certain seasons of the year from outside areas. In several Piedmont coun-

ties the production of milk for manufacturing purposes is an important source of supplementary farm income.

Poultry and egg production is being more and more commercialized. However, the production from farm flocks is still important. Commercial production to supply market demands is centered around Anderson, Greenville, Spartanburg, Columbia, Charleston, and other cities. Turkey growing is becoming increasingly important throughout the state.

Commercial Irish potato and truck crop production comprises the main agricultural pursuits in type-of-farming area 8, Charleston and Beaufort counties. Smaller areas of production of these crops, particularly Irish potatoes, are found in adjacent and nearby counties.

Other local truck crop areas include the production of English peas, string beans, and certain other truck crops in the lower part of Orangeburg county, in the vicinity of Holly Hill, and in the vicinity of Lake City and Kingstree in Florence and Williamsburg counties, respectively. A small area of commercial strawberry production is located in the vicinity of Loris in Horry county. Other minor areas of truck crop production are located throughout the state.

SELECTING A FARM

There are many important things to consider in selecting a farm. The prospective farmer must first decide whether he will be a full-time farmer, a part-time farmer, or whether he is just looking for a place to live in the country. He must also make a decision as to the type of farming he desires to do.

After these decisions have been made, other important things to consider are soil, topography, climate, rainfall, condition and adequacy of buildings and improvements, availability of good roads, electricity, churches, schools and other public services, markets, and whether the farm will provide enough business to furnish the farm income and family living desired.

Although it is rarely possible to find on a particular farm all the desirable features which a prospective buyer may have in mind, there are several things which must be considered. The prospective purchaser should weigh the different characteristics of the farms and select the farm most appealing to him.

Before investing in farm land, the prospective purchaser should consider at least the following features:

Good Productive Soil

It is desirable to select good productive soil adapted for the use intended. This can be determined after the soils are classified and the present characteristics and capabilities are determined. The presence of serious insects, plant diseases, and weed pests is not desirable. In addition to good soil, it is important to make sure that an ample supply of water for the home and the farm is available.

The natural fertility of the soil is important. Poor crops may result from neglect or unfavorable weather conditions; consequently, one must distinguish between a neglected farm and a farm with poor land.

Topography

The topography, or the lay of the land, is important from the standpoint of soil erosion, the size and shape of the fields, and the use of larger machinery and equipment. Likewise, freedom from stumps, stones, or other obstacles is important. If these are present, the cost of removing them should be considered.

Buildings and Improvements

The number and kind of buildings on farms should be carefully considered. The buildings should be adapted to and adequate for the type of farming to be conducted on the farm, but the investment in buildings should not be out of proportion to that of the land. Good comfortable tenant houses, with added conveniences, are important factors in promoting satisfactory relationships with tenants. Other improvements, such as fences, should be consider-

ed. If inadequate, or poorly located, the cost of putting up additional fences or relocating old ones should be considered.

Size of Business

The area in crops, orchards, and woodland, and the yields, together with the proper combination of labor, capital, and managerial ability, are important factors in determining profits. The same principle holds true for farms producing livestock, dairy products, or other enterprises. An adequate volume or size of business is just as essential for a successful farm as profits per acre or per head of livestock. A relatively larger farm tends to have greater labor efficiency than a smaller one.

Use of Land

Generally, the production of crops represents the best use of farm land in South Carolina. It is important, however, to consider also the present acreages and quality of pasture land and woodland. The adaptability of the farm land to grow the desired crops, pasture grasses and plants, and trees should also be considered. The possibility that the use of land may change should be considered in determining present land values. The value of the products grown on the land over a long period of years serves as a guide in determining land values.

Shape and Size of Fields

The shape and size of the fields and the nearness of the fields to the farmstead are important. If the arrangement is not a good one, the cost of rearrangement and the probable loss of time and profits while making the changes must be considered. If such changes are not made, much time may be lost in the operation of the farm.

Terracing and Drainage

Proper terracing and/or drainage are essential. If these are not present, the cost of providing them should be considered. The le-

gal character of the drainage districts and the cost and upkeep of the drainage structures should be considered.

Labor-Saving Machinery

The possibility of the use of and the total investment in labor-saving machinery should not be overlooked. The selection of suitable kinds and sizes of farm machinery should be carefully considered in relation to the size of the farm and the use of the machinery.

Markets and Roads

Location with respect to good roads and markets is a significant item to consider. Good roads and improved transportation facilities will permit more perishable farm products from more distant places to come into a particular market. With such improvements, the locational advantage of the lands closer to the market will tend to become less important since products can come into the market from greater distances.

Churches, Schools, and Other Public Services

Community improvements, such as churches, schools, and community services, are important features to consider. When located within reasonable distance of the farm, such community improvements add to the value of farm land. If they are not available and are to be supplied, the cost should be considered. The availability of electricity and telephone service should also be considered. From the standpoint of making a home in the community, the neighbors are important.

Part-Time Industrial Employment

The location with respect to cities or industries is another important factor to consider. With good roads, more automobiles, and other means of transportation, more industries are locating in rural areas. In such areas the use of farm lands for building homes and for part-time farming will no doubt become more im-

portant in the future. Employment in nearby industries, in service, or other occupations of the farm operator and members of his family on a seasonal basis or when not busy on the farm provides an opportunity for greater earnings. This in turn should result in less difficulty in making payments on the farm.

Legal Safeguards

After the decision has been made to purchase a particular farm, it is important to know the legal status of the property and to make sure that the title is clear.

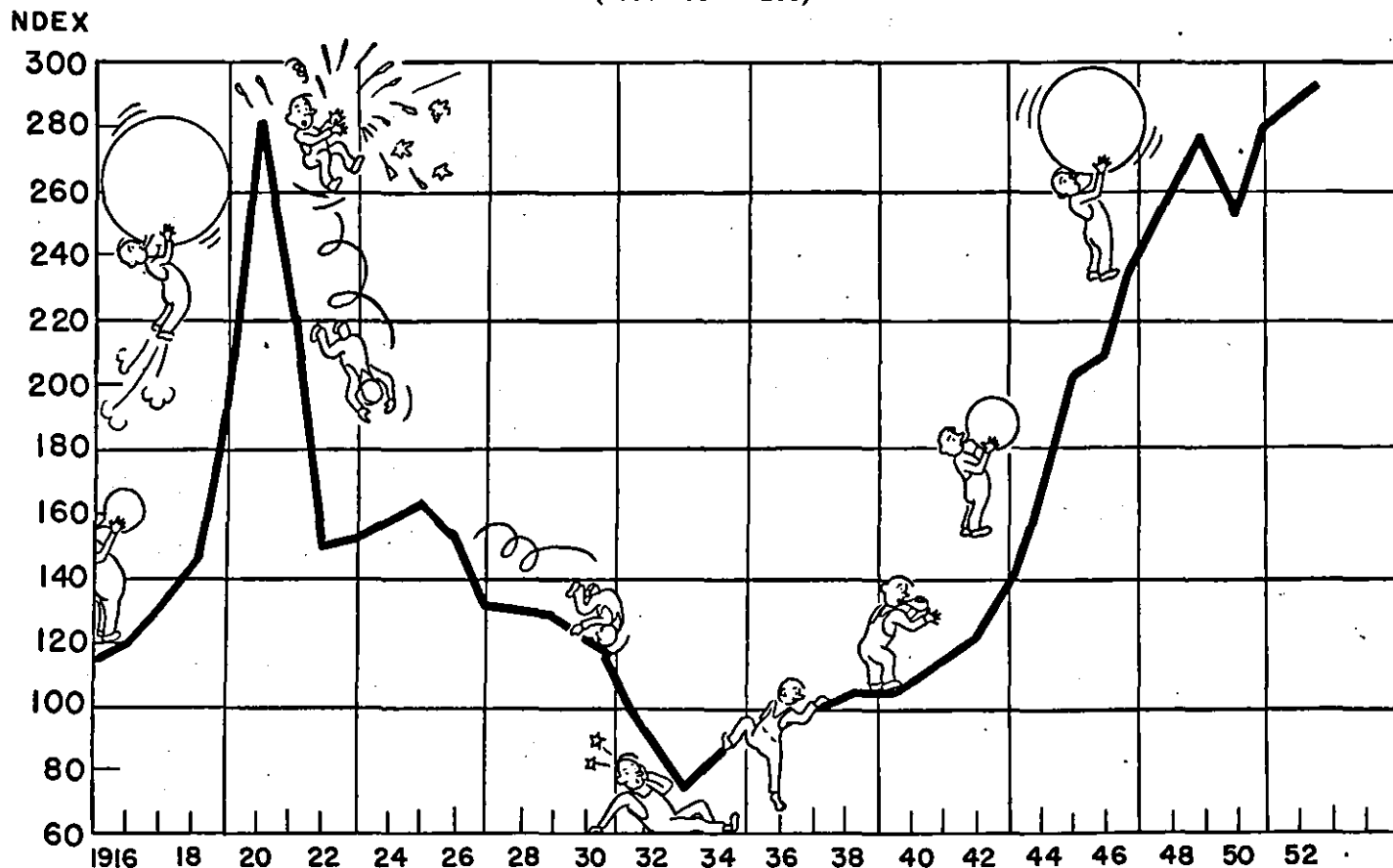
FARM LAND PRICES

Farm land prices in this state have followed closely the trend in farm incomes and general business conditions. For individual farms, however, other factors might be more important. The index of price of farm real estate in South Carolina, as of March 1, 1915-1952, is shown in Figure 8.

The price of farm real estate in this state has fluctuated widely during the 40-year period for which data are available. However, the general trend in farm land prices has been either rising or falling for long periods of time. The first peak in farm land prices was reached in 1920. After this there was a general downward trend until 1933, except for the short period 1923 to 1925, when some increase took place after the drastic decline in 1921 and 1922. There has been a steady increase in the price of farm real estate since 1933, except for 1950 when there was a slight decline from 1949.

According to the 1950 Census of Agriculture, the average value of farm land and buildings per farm ranges from about \$3,500 to \$8,100. However, these figures do not reflect the price of a typical farm unit. The price of a typical farm would likely be higher, but this would depend upon the particular tract of land. Furthermore,

INDEX OF PRICE OF FARM REAL ESTATE, SOUTH CAROLINA, 1915-1952* (1935 - 39 = 100)



Compiled from reports of USDA.

Figure 8

there would still need to be added the cost of livestock, machinery and equipment, and other items needed for stocking and equipping the farm.

Very few farmers, particularly those just starting into farming, are able to pay cash for the full purchase price. On the other hand, few people are willing to loan their own money, or that entrusted to them, for buying a farm unless they are reasonably sure that the borrower has a reasonable chance of repaying the loan and unless the loan is in reasonable proportion to the value of the property offered as collateral.

It is always a good policy not to pay more for the farm than future earnings justify and to pay as large a proportion as possible of the initial cost of the farm in cash. A farmer who pays cash for a farm is less likely to lose his equity in it during periods of depression than one who purchases on a narrow margin. However, the payment of cash for a farm does not preclude bankruptcy during periods of severe depression and low farm prices lasting for long periods.

Commercial banks, life insurance companies, government agencies, government-sponsored credit agencies, and other credit institutions make mortgage loans on farms. These agencies limit their loans to a certain percent of the value of the property and are not likely to make loans to inexperienced persons to buy a farm.

OTHER INFORMATION

The best sources of advice regarding the agriculture of a particular community are the successful farmers in the community. Information regarding the agriculture of South Carolina may be obtained from publications issued by Clemson College. A list of the available publications may be obtained from the Publications Department.

Soil Conservation Districts

The entire state has been organized into soil conservation districts. The Soil Conservation Service, cooperating with districts, has made detailed conservation surveys on a large number of the farms in the state. These conservation surveys show the soil type, slope, amount of erosion, and the capability class of the land. A prospective farmer, buyer, or renter, should contact the soil conservation district office and inquire whether a conservation survey has been made on the farm he may be interested in buying or renting, as this survey contains valuable information which he should consider before making his final decision.

County and Home Demonstration Agents

Every county in South Carolina has a county agent and home demonstration agent, located at the county seat, who are employed jointly by the Extension Service of Clemson College and the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. These agents are familiar with farm and rural living conditions in their counties. These agents are not in the real estate business or in the business of recruiting and placing labor, but they are in position to assist farm people with their problems of production, management, marketing, and improving family living and living conditions. The county agent is in position to offer much helpful advice to persons interested in farming on a full-time or part-time basis. In some instances he may be able to refer them to farmers and others who can give them information about available farms for sale or rent as well as opportunities about jobs as hired men.

Persons outside the state desiring to purchase a farm in South Carolina may find it desirable to insert a want ad to this effect in newspapers covering the county in which they wish to locate, or they may contact real estate dealers or lending institutions having farm land for sale.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5: Courtesy of Research, Planning, and Development Board. Bulletin 3, Third Edition, Columbia, S. C.

Figure 6: Courtesy of the South Carolina Experiment Station, Bulletin 310.

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