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Our Corn-Hog-Cattle Belt

by Geoffrey Shepherd and Kurt Ullrich

THE HEART of the Corn Belt has been more than holding its own in production of corn and hogs. The production of these, in fact, is becoming more concentrated in the four central Corn Belt states. At the same time, these four states are just about holding their own in the production of oats, cattle and calves.

There was some concern up to 1959 that corn acreage controls and the denying of loans to non-compliers might be driving some corn production out of the Corn Belt. Some thought, too, that the substitution of corn for controlled crops, such as cotton and wheat, was increasing corn production outside of the commercial corn area.

We analyzed acreage and production statistics 2 years ago and found that this had not been happening. We pointed out in the September 1958 *IOWA FARM SCIENCE* that the reverse was true: Corn acreage and production was becoming more concentrated in the Corn Belt.

This in itself, however, didn't prove that the corn, cotton and wheat programs hadn't been driving some corn acreage and production out of the Corn Belt. The programs still could have been having this effect, but could have been offset by changes in tech-

nology as well as other factors.

We now can add the corn acreage and production data for 1958-59 to our study. Acreage controls, compliance (as an eligibility requirement for loans) and lower loan rates outside the commercial corn area were abandoned in 1959, and the loan rate was lowered to 65 percent of parity. Now we can see what effects this had on the location of corn acreage and production.

Corn Acreage: Only four states are all, or nearly all, included in the commercial corn area—Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio in the heart of the Corn Belt. Corn acreage data for these and the rest of the United States are compared in chart 1. The upper line represents the acreage in the four Corn Belt states, and it continued to move upward rel-

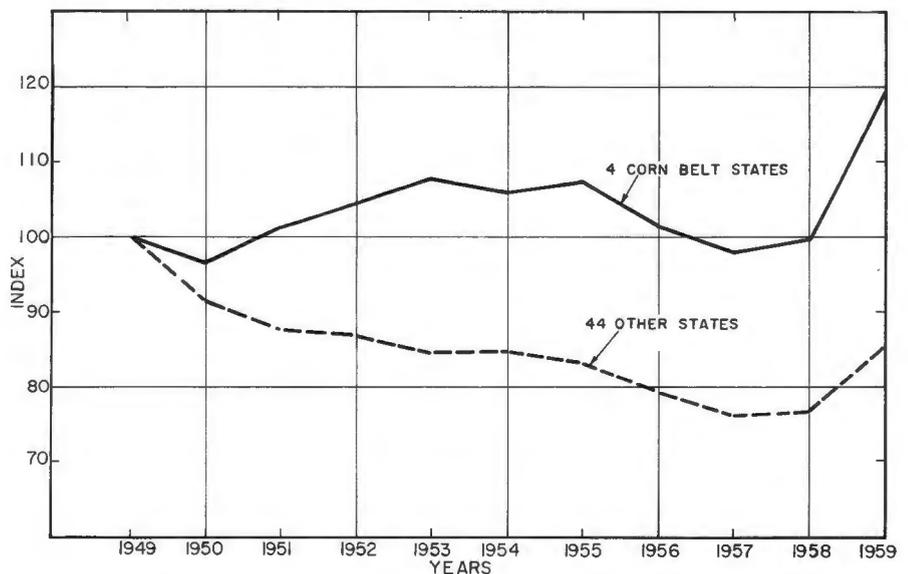
ative to the other states in 1958-59. This means that, as it was doing before, corn acreage continued to become more concentrated in the four central Corn Belt states in 1958-59.

This tendency increased even more in 1959 when the new loan rates for corn went into effect and acreage controls and restriction of loans to compliers were abandoned.

Corn Production: What happened to corn production is shown in chart 2. The upper line rose in absolute figures, but the lower line rose more in 1958. But in 1959 the upper line rose farther above the lower line than ever before. That is, corn production was more concentrated in the four central Corn Belt states than ever before.

We knew, on the other hand,

CHART 1.



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CHART 2.

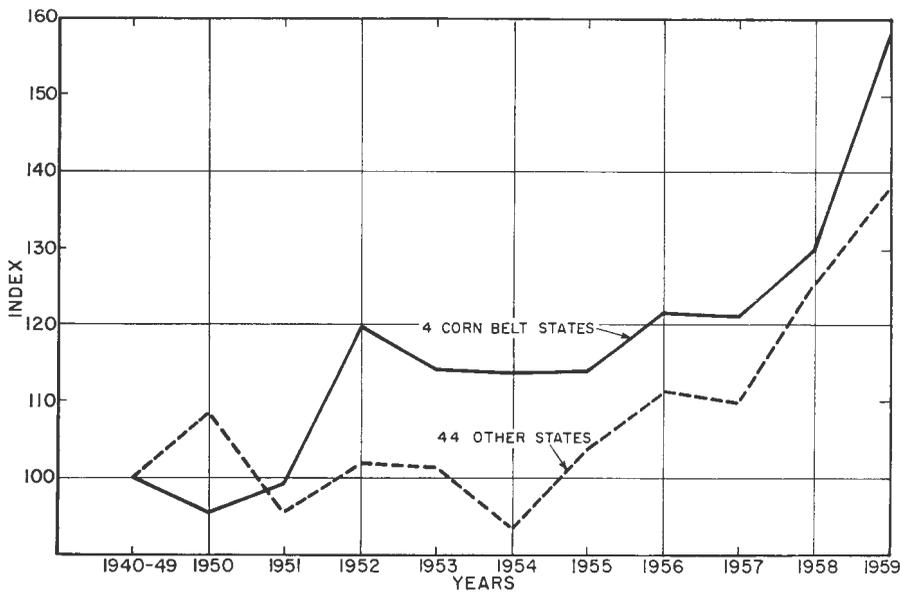


CHART 3.

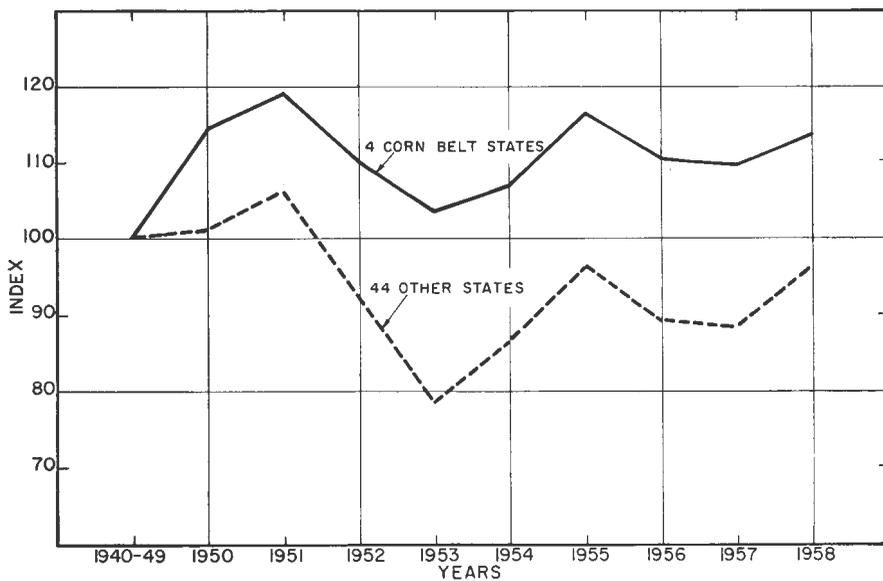
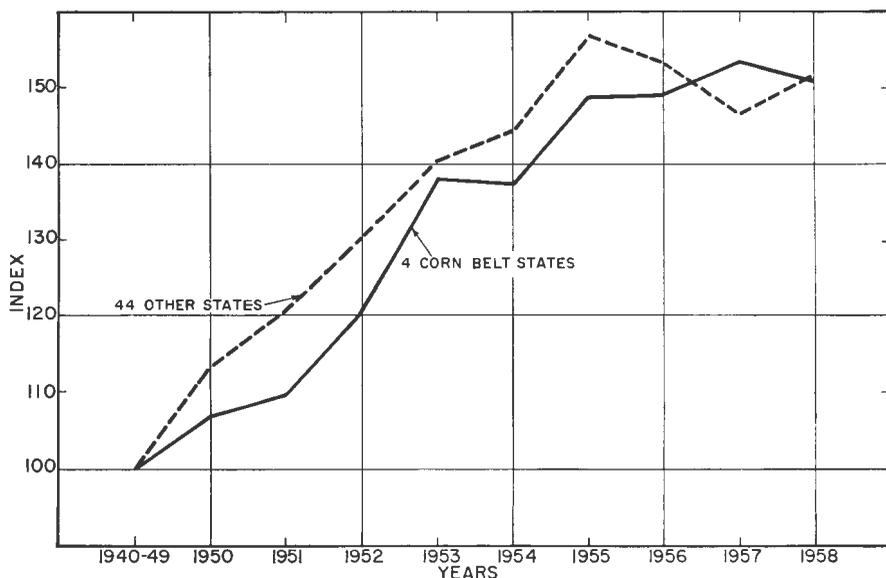


CHART 4.



that Minnesota produces more corn than Ohio, so Minnesotans have a right to ask, "What happens when Minnesota is included instead of Ohio?" We computed this. The answer: Same thing.

We also analyzed the data for oats. The answer for oats: The four central Corn Belt states are just about holding their own. If the four leading oats-producing states (Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin) are substituted for Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, the answer still is the same.

Hogs: Most of the corn produced in the United States is fed to livestock, principally hogs. Now that we know about corn, what about hogs or cattle? The situation for hogs is shown in chart 3. The pig crop during the past few years in the four central Corn Belt states was about 10 percent greater than in 1940-49. The pig crop in the rest of the nation ran about 10 percent below 1940-49. So the difference was about 20 percent. In 1958, the last year shown, the difference narrowed slightly.

Thus, hog production as well as corn production has been becoming more concentrated in the four central Corn Belt states. The same sort of thing is true, but a little more marked, for the four leading hog-producing states—Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Missouri.

Cattle: The situation for cattle and calves is summed up in chart 4 which shows the changes in the quantity (liveweight) of cattle and calves produced. Cattle production in the four central Corn Belt states has just about been holding its own. The index for these states ran 5-10 percent lower than the index for the rest of the nation until 1957 when the index for the four states rose 6 percent above that for the other states. The two were practically the same in 1958.

The same sort of thing is true for the four leading cattle-producing states—Texas, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas.

Thus, the Corn Belt is more than holding its own in corn and hog production and is roughly keeping pace in cattle production, too.