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MINNESOTA FARM MANAGEMENT SERVICE NOTES

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Prepared by the Farm Management Group at University Farm, St. Paul, Minn.

Types of Farming Areas in Minnesota

There are many factors which have an important influence on the agricultural production of any region. These factors come for the most part under three main heads. They are (1) physical or natural, (2) biological, and (3) economic.

Of the physical factors, soil and climate are the most significant. Plant disease and insect pests are most important among the biological factors. Among the economic factors land values, availability of labor, transportation and marketing facilities are the most significant.

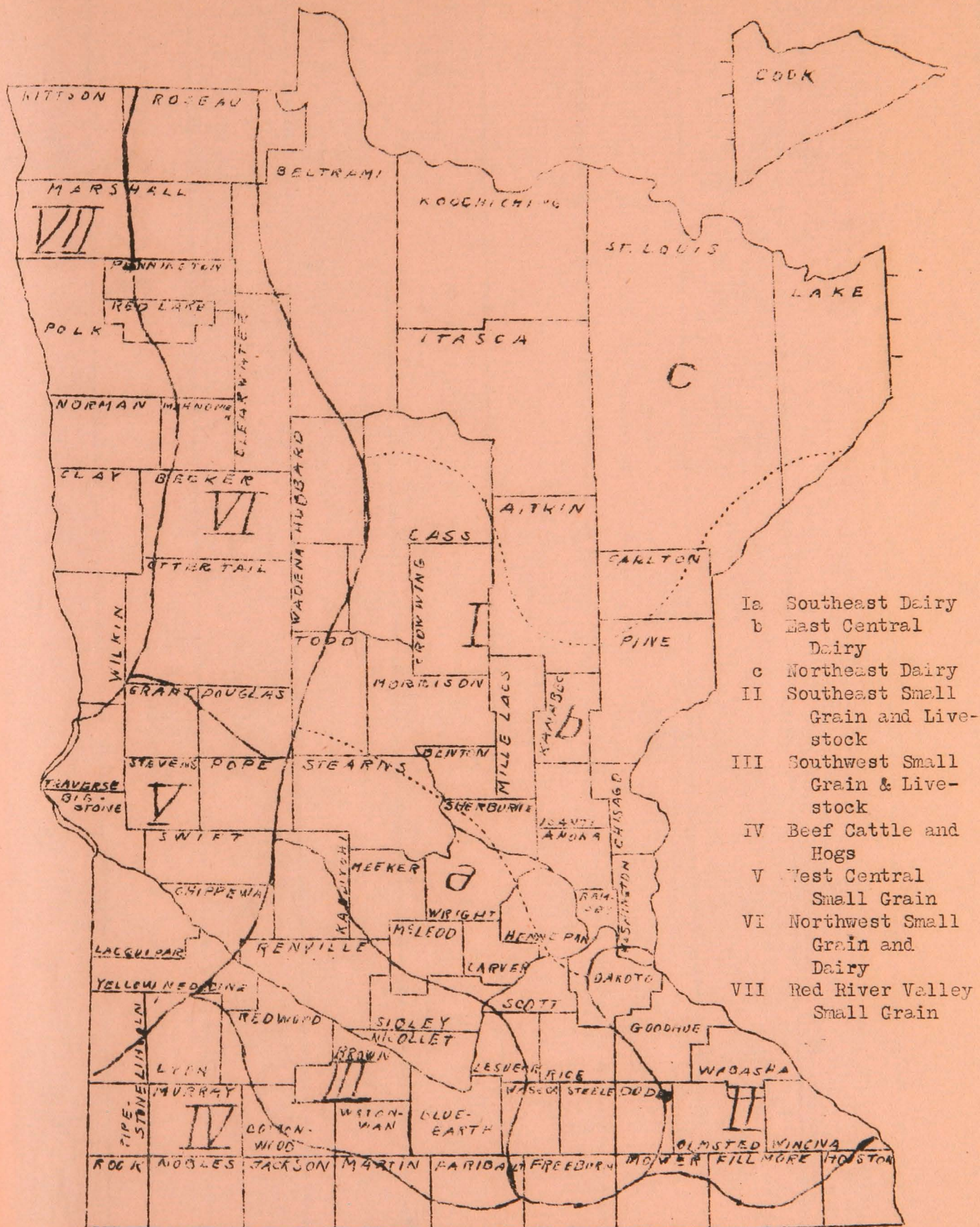
As a general practice farmers build their systems of farming around the crops which are naturally adapted to the region in which they are farming. Those crops are selected which have an economic advantage over other crops that can be grown in the area. In the spring wheat region the farmers build their business largely around the wheat crop. In the corn belt it is built around corn and in the cotton belt around cotton. Other enterprises are added which do not conflict too seriously with the main enterprise. In localities where a wide range of crops may be grown farmers consider also the kind of livestock which may best be used in converting certain crops and by-products into marketable commodities. One may find different choices as to the kind of livestock desired to complete the farm business.

There are seven areas in Minnesota which are representative of different types or systems of farming. These areas are shown on page 2. There are many localities in each area where the type of farming is different but on the whole the most dominant type is that indicated by the names of the areas. For example, dairying is the most important part of the farm business in Area I. Dairying may be just as important in some localities or on some farms in each of the other areas. Beef cattle and hogs constitute the chief part of the farm business in Area IV but there are localities in Area III where they constitute the major enterprises in farming. There are similar exceptions in each of the other areas.

The production areas outlined on page 2 are made from a careful study of the 1919 census and are based upon the proportionate acreage of crops grown and the proportionate numbers of livestock produced. Obviously size of farms and amount of capital in the different areas varies. Space, however, will not permit a discussion of this phase of the problem.

The division lines between the areas do not indicate a sharp distinction between one type of farming and another. Rather they represent zones perhaps several miles in width in which the types of farming overlap. In these places farming may be that of an intermediate type.

Production Areas in Minnesota



- Ia Southeast Dairy
- b East Central Dairy
- c Northeast Dairy
- II Southeast Small Grain and Live-stock
- III Southwest Small Grain & Live-stock
- IV Beef Cattle and Hogs
- V West Central Small Grain
- VI Northwest Small Grain and Dairy
- VII Red River Valley Small Grain

Description of the Areas

Area I Where Dairying is Dominant

- a. Southeast Dairy - Dairying in this area is conducted on an intensive scale. Butterfat is the chief dairy product sold altho whole milk is marketed around cities and in a few localities where cheese factories are located. Dairy products constitute the chief source of income which is supplemented by income from swine, poultry and small grain, principally wheat. Farming in this area is now established on the basis of many years of experience.
- b. East Central Dairy - Except for the Twin City whole milk district and that around a few smaller cities, butterfat constitutes the chief form of dairy products sold. Income from hogs, poultry, potatoes and some small grain, chiefly wheat and rye, supplement the dairy income. In a few localities poultry products are produced by intensive methods.
- c. Northeast Dairy - While dairying constitutes the major enterprise of the farm business the total income is not large except with a few scattered exceptions. Income from poultry, sheep and potatoes make up the balance of the income from farming. Many of the farmers work in the woods or on the roads during the slack seasons of the year and this adds to their income. There is but little agriculture in the iron ore districts which are in this area.

Area II Southeast Small Grain and Livestock

Farming in this area is of the mixed type. Dairy, beef, hogs and poultry all contribute to the farm income. Of the small grains, wheat flax and barley contribute the most. The topography along the rivers is very rolling and furnishes excellent grazing. Some of the land is quite heavily timbered and furnishes lumber for farm buildings.

Area III This area has a diversity of income. Beef, dairy and swine production are well established and contribute heavily to the farm income. At present there is a tendency toward dairy expansion in the northeastern portion of the area and toward beef in the southwestern part. In this area south of the Minnesota River corn is especially well adapted and it is probable that beef cattle and hogs will continue to have an important place in the farm business. North of the river hay becomes more important and dairying may become more prominent there.

Area IV Beef Cattle and Hogs

The largest part of the farm income in this area comes from cattle and hogs. Dairying is increasing in the southeastern part. In addition to dairy products, poultry and sheep add some to the farm income. Some income is received from the sale of crops. This area constitutes a part of the national corn belt. The farm business will doubtless continue to be built around the beef cattle and swine enterprises.

Area V West Central Small Grain

Farmers in this area depend on small grain for a large part of their income. Wheat is the most important small grain from the standpoint of cash income, altho a small amount of income is received from rye, oats, barley and flax. Corn is becoming more important in this area. Beef and dairy production are about of equal importance, altho a good part of the dairy products is produced from cows of beef breeding. Sheep are of minor importance. The poultry enterprise has been smaller than the size of the farm justifies.

Area VI Northwest Small Grain and Dairy

Much of the farm income in this area comes from wheat, rye and flax, one-third of the crop land being devoted to these crops. Oats, barley and corn are practically all grown for feed. Some potatoes are raised to sell. Dairy products constitute the chief form of livestock production. There is some income from sheep, hogs and poultry, altho the amount from each of these enterprises is small. An increase of leguminous crops in the southern part of the area is causing a shift toward the dairy type of farming.

Area VII Red River Small Grain

This area is the most representative of the small grain type of farming in the state. Approximately one-fifth of the crop is devoted to wheat ~~production~~. Rye, flax and potatoes as well as some oats and barley provide some income. Dairy cattle contribute most to the income from livestock. Beef cattle, hogs and poultry contribute about the same amount but the total amount is not large. Sheep add but little to the income altho there is a tendency to expand this enterprise.

It should be kept in mind that the boundry lines of these areas may change over a period of years. It is not likely, however, that the shift in crops or livestock from one year to the next will be great enough to change the boundry line any appreciable distance. The largest amount of shifting in the farm enterprises takes place near the margin of the areas where farming is more or less in an intermediate stage.

L.F. Garey and Andrew Boss.