

agricultural situation

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THE CROP REPORTERS MAGAZINE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • CROP REPORTING BOARD



HOG SLAUGHTER:
BE YOUR OWN FORECASTER

HOG SLAUGHTER: BE YOUR OWN FORECASTER

A livestock producer can make a reasonable projection of hog slaughter for the next 6 to 12 months. His starting point is the Crop Reporting Board's quarterly *Hogs and Pigs* report.

The procedure's easy to follow, and with the help of three charts, we'll show you how to use the June 1, 1978, *Hogs and Pigs* report to gage potential market supplies during the June-November 1978 and December-May 1979 periods.

YOUR DATA BASE

The *Hogs and Pigs* reports provide the following data, which you'll need to estimate hog slaughter up to a year ahead: total market hogs, the past 6-months' pig crop, and the expected pig crop for the next 6 months.

Already the major data source for meat supply forecasters in both industry and government, these reports are also a tool that livestock producers can use in making production and marketing decisions.

The summary pages of each report will give you a feel for the supply situation both at the regional and national levels. The left side of the table on p. 3 contains highlights from the June 1, 1978, *Hogs and Pigs* report, which we'll use to project upcoming hog slaughter.

CHARTING PROSPECTIVE SLAUGHTER

Forecasting hog slaughter involves using selected data from the

table on p. 3 and the three separate charts, which show the following relationships for the past 7 years: Chart 1—market hogs on hand as of June 1 and U.S. commercial hog slaughter during June-November; Chart 2—the December-May pig crop and slaughter for June-November; Chart 3—the June-November pig crop and slaughter for December-May.

First, we'll use Charts 1 and 2 to forecast marketings during June-November:

Step 1: On the bottom of Chart 1, pinpoint the June 1 number of hogs for market (46,131,000) on the horizontal grid.

Step 2: From there, move straight up to the diagonal guide line.

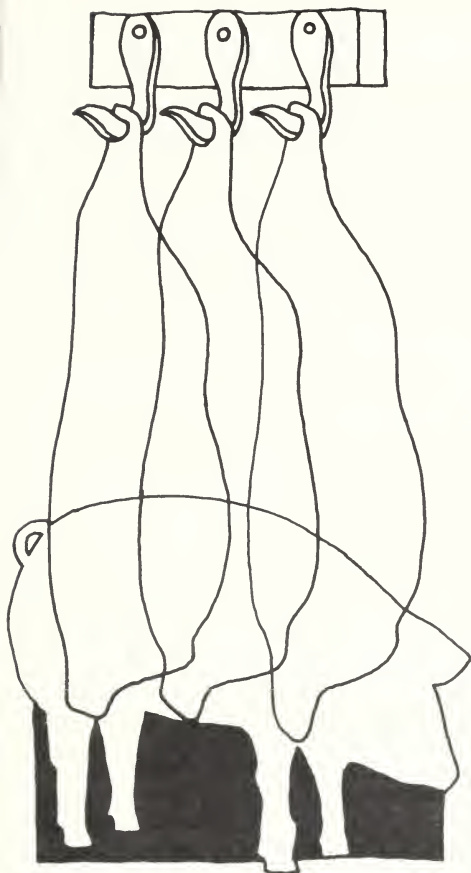
Step 3: From your spot on the diagonal, read across to the vertical (left) margin of the chart to get the probable level of commercial hog slaughter during June-November. Your reading should be around 36.5 million head.

For Chart 2, go back to the table on p. 3 to find the December-May pig crop. Locate this figure (42,343,000) on the horizontal grid, then repeat Steps 2 and 3. Your result will be a June-November commercial hog slaughter of around 37.0 million head.

Though your readings from Charts 1 and 2 will differ somewhat, they should be in the range of 36.5 to 38.0 million head to be slaughtered during June-November 1978.

Each *Hogs and Pigs* report also includes an estimate of producers' farrowing plans for the next 6 months. Remember, the intentions tend to reflect industry conditions just prior to the report. When these conditions change, producers alter their plans, sometimes dramatically. Various environmental and economic factors all play an important role in determining what the actual farrowings will be.

The upcoming June-November



pig crop is estimated by multiplying the intended sow farrowings by an average litter rate adjusted for trend. The pigs born during June-November 1978 will provide most of the slaughter market supply for December 1978 through May 1979.

Now let's use Chart 3 to project the commercial slaughter for this period. Using the estimated June-November pig crop from the *Hogs and Pigs* report (44,978,000 head) follow the same procedure used to project the June-November marketings (Steps 1-3). You should get an estimate of 42 to 44 million head.

ADJUST FOR JUDGMENT FACTORS

You can see that all three charts include dots and years above and below the diagonal lines. These dots indicate the actual marketings for those years, while the diagonal line indicates the average for 1971-77. The distance between the dots and the diagonals shows how far the annual marketings deviated from the 7-year average.

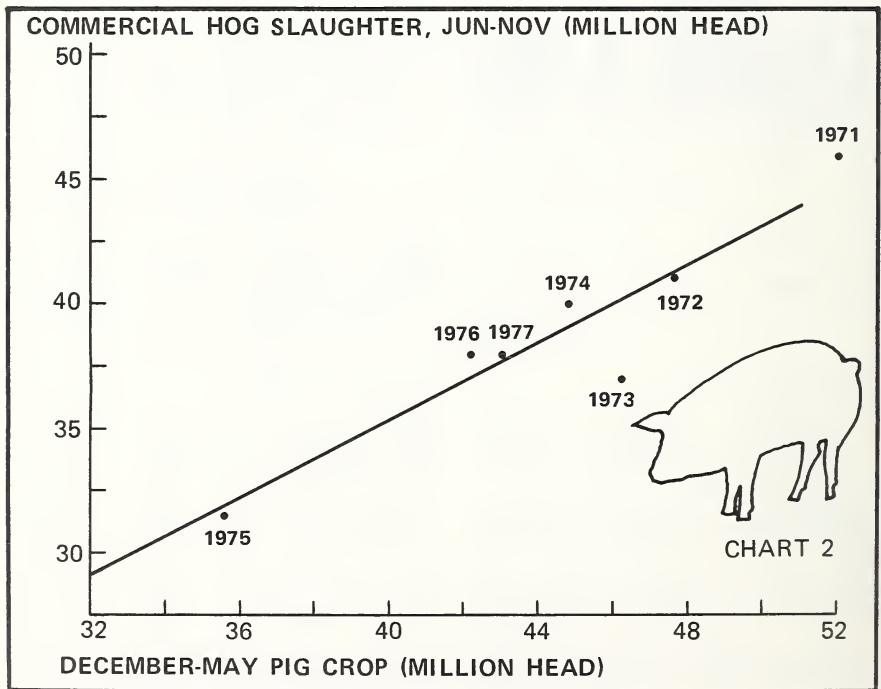
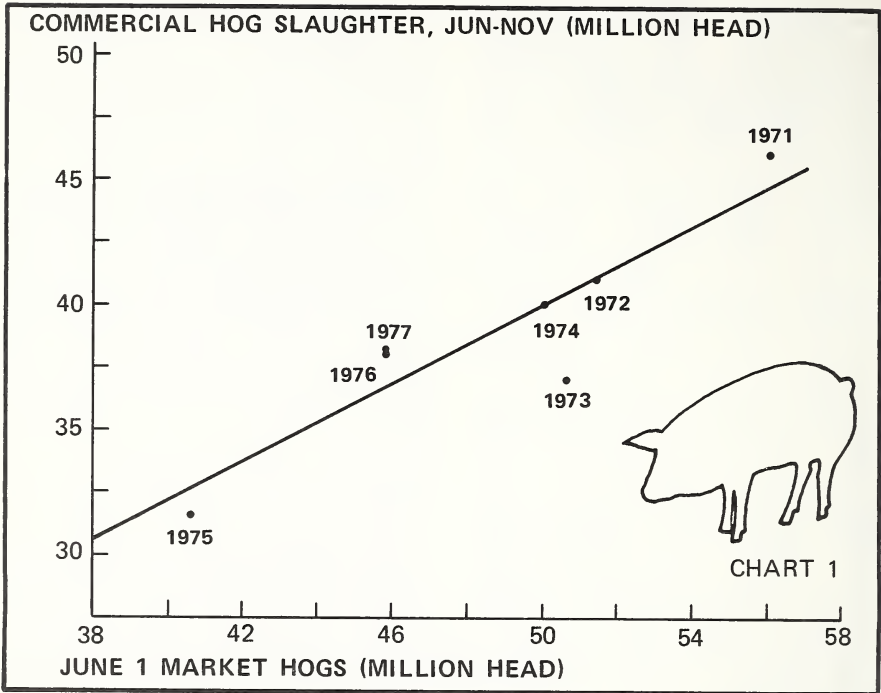
There's usually a logical explanation for each variation—or even

HOGS AND PIGS

PROJECTED SLAUGHTER

Item	1977	1978	'78 as % of '77	Period	Mil. head	'78 as % of '77
-- 1000 head --				-- Range --		
Inventory, June 1						
All hogs & pigs	54,480	54,930	101			
For market	45,787	46,131	101	June- Nov. '78	36.5- 38.0	96- 99
Pig Crop						
Dec.-May	42,959	42,343	99	June- Nov. '78	36.5- 38.0	96- 99
June-Nov.	43,232	44,978	104	Dec. '78- May '79	42.0- 44.0	108- 113

¹Intentions for sows to farrow times an average number of pigs per litter with allowance for trend.



COMMERCIAL HOG SLAUGHTER, DEC-MAY (MILLION HEAD)

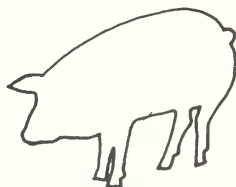
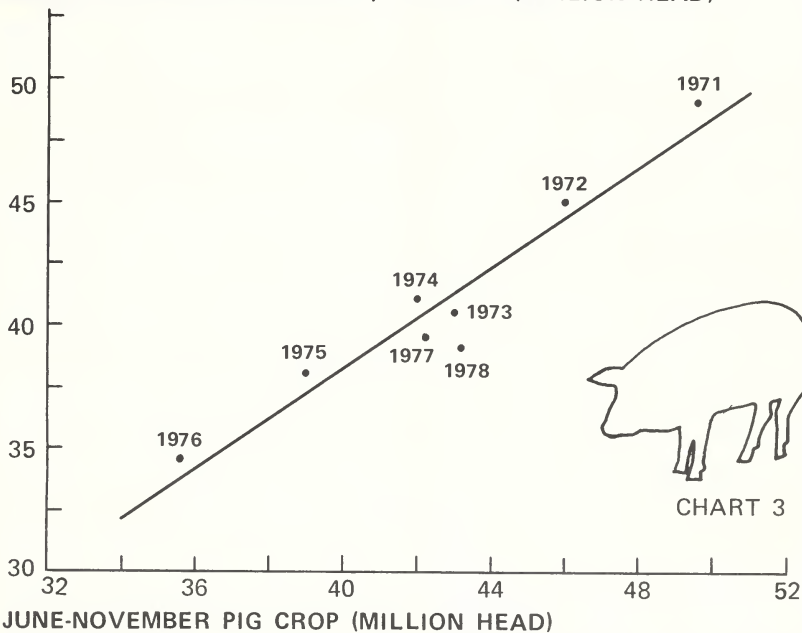


CHART 3

more likely, there are several factors involved. In 1973, for example, weight gains were much slower than usual because of adverse weather during the winter and spring. Also, much of the 1972 corn crop that was fed to hogs over the winter lacked sufficient protein. In turn, it took hogs a longer time to reach market weights.

Hogs usually gain about 1 to 1-2/3 pounds a day from birth to slaughter. The common slaughter market weight averages 235-240 pounds, which means that most market hogs on hand June 1 probably will be slaughtered in the following 5 to 7 months. The table on p. 6 shows the approximate marketing schedule for the various weight groups throughout the year.

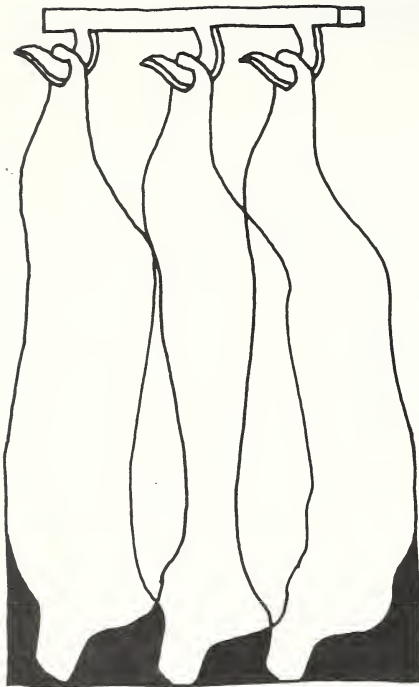
Superimposed on this marketing pattern are the effects of producer, packer-buyer, and consumer reactions to price changes. Quite obviously, judgment plays a part in

forecasting future marketings, and when plotting your charts you may want to adjust your forecast up or down depending on what you think production or market prices portend.

When current prices are favorable but the near-term prospects are pessimistic, producers tend to market at lighter weights, so that the number actually slaughtered may be larger than one would have projected.

When prices are declining, producers tend to hold hogs a little longer in hopes prices will improve. The upshot is usually an increase in average weights and perhaps fewer hogs going to slaughter in one particular period than expected.

But keep in mind, hogs must eventually go to market. Keeping tabs on their movement requires a close look at the inventory by weight groups that appears in each quarterly *Hogs and Pigs* report. By comparing current numbers and



weights to previous years and previous quarters, a producer can draw some conclusions about how the "pork assembly line" is moving.

HOW FORECASTING CAN WORK FOR YOU

The relatively simple charting procedure described above can help producers get a perspective on the hog supply situation in the coming months. And this may help you time your marketings to get the very best price advantage.

For instance, if you foresee a boost in marketings in the near future and you have hogs nearing market weight, you might want to move them to market before the crowd gets there and prices sag.

And it's a sure thing that the better your knowledge of the overall hog supply situation, the better your market position will be.

A MARKETING TIMETABLE

The Crop Reporting Board's monthly *Livestock Slaughter* reports indicate that most pigs go to market 5 to 7 months after they're born, if weight gains are close to the average of 1 to 1-2/3 pounds a day. The table below shows the approximate slaughter period for hogs in the various weight classes at the start of the June and December quarters, when data are available for the entire United States. (The March and September *Hogs and Pigs* reports cover only the 14 major producing States. However, as of June 1, 1978, these States claimed 86 percent of the U.S. hog inventory.)

JUNE 1 WEIGHTS	SLAUGHTER PERIOD
180 pounds and over	June
120 to 179 pounds	July into early August
60 to 119 pounds	Early August through September
Under 60 pounds	After September
DECEMBER 1 WEIGHTS	SLAUGHTER PERIOD
180 pounds and over	December
120 to 179 pounds	January into early February
60 to 119 pounds	Early February through mid-April
Under 60 pounds	After mid-April

DATA USERS HAVE THEIR SAY

Expand and change. Whatever it takes to get the job done. That pretty well describes today's agriculture. It also explains the agricultural estimating program conducted by USDA's Crop Reporting Board.

What started as a very limited series of annual crop, livestock, and price summaries many years ago is now a broad based efficient data gathering and reporting effort that serves all of agriculture with frequent and detailed information.

This increased service has come at the direct request of producers and marketers and their organizations, legislators, and Federal and State officials. New estimating series have been developed and ongoing ones enlarged in response to the needs of the industry.

The Crop Reporting Board has always actively sought comments, criticisms, and ideas from farmers, ranchers, and others in agriculture when a program change was under consideration.

Earlier this year, the Board took the open forum approach one step further and met with representatives from a cross section of agriculture. Attending this first data users' workshop were spokesmen for the National Corn Growers Association, United Egg Producers, American Seed Trade Association, National Turkey Federation, American Soybean Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, National Pork Producers Council, and various other industry sectors.

This was not a pat-on-the-back get-together. The Crop Reporting Board was looking for definitive evaluations of the work they were doing and what needed to be improved. The visitors obliged.

For the most part, the recommendations centered on requests for

an expanded estimating program, no cut in existing major forecasting activity and continued implementation of new and improved statistical techniques to assure accurate and timely data.

Significant suggestions included:

- From turkey and egg representatives—provide more data on flock size, number of eggs produced, and prices; expand information on processed turkeys.

- From the grain and feed trade—furnish more facts about grain and soybeans stored on farms; continue planted acreage estimates in June, but release them earlier in the month; increase data on white corn production, marketing, and storage; make the season's first forecast of wheat production earlier than the current July release.

- From the hog and cattle sector—develop a barrow and gilt slaughter percentage which can be combined with sow slaughter for a better indication of farrowing intentions; don't decrease the number of States covered in the monthly Cattle on Feed reports.

- From milk producers—maintain all current estimates and add details about production and utilization of nonfat milk solids.

The representatives also noted interest in up-to-date information on the costs of producing soybeans; more data from fruit and vegetable canners; simplified survey questionnaires; and a continued management separation between the Crop Reporting Board's objective estimates, and analysis and projections from other sources within USDA.

Along with the suggestions for program adjustments came solid endorsements for existing estimates. One representative claimed the current statistical reports offer a vital contribution to greater efficiency in grain marketing, while another pointed out the impact the Board's estimates have across the livestock industry.

LOCAL TOUCH: CONTACTS FOR FARM FACTS

National, State, and county agricultural facts and figures are available through the 44 field offices of the Crop Reporting Board. Each office issues the latest U.S. crops, livestock, price, and other estimates plus additional data about local and regional farming situations. Contact these offices for current production and supply indications, historical material, or a list of regular reports.



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WORLD FOOD PRICES COOL A BIT



Consumers around the world continue to face bigger grocery bills, though food prices have been climbing at a slower pace during the past 2 years.

Noting an overall cooling in both the food price indexes and consumer price indexes in 16 countries surveyed, USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service reports that this spring only five of the nations were still measuring inflation rates in double digits.

Every 2 months, attachés stationed in the capital cities of the 16 countries check the retail prices of a selected number of food products ranging from steak and onions to rice and sugar. According to reports, prices on May 3 generally reflected seasonal supply-demand patterns.

However, since the previous survey in March, sirloin steak prices had climbed in 11 of the 16 capitals, with Canberra, Copenhagen, London, and Mexico City all notching substantial increases. And while shoppers in Washington, D.C., probably didn't consider sirloin steak a bargain, they paid less per pound than consumers in 10 of the other world capitals.

Washingtonians, in fact, paid less than the median price for eight of the 21 food items surveyed, including boneless chuck roast, pork chops, broilers, and bacon.

Meantime, Tokyo was by far the most expensive place to shop for groceries during early May.

PRICES PAID BY SHOPPERS IN 16 CAPITALS

City	Steak, sirloin, boneless	Pork chops	Bacon, sliced, pkgd.	Eggs, dozen	Butter	Toma-toes
<i>U.S. dollars per kg., or units as indicated, at current exchange rates¹</i>						
Bonn	12.43	4.56	8.29	1.29	3.92	1.96
Brasilia	2.02	2.90	6.24	.83	2.57	.86
Brussels	11.22	5.26	4.61	1.33	4.58	3.80
Buenos Aires	1.17	1.70	3.80	.89	3.01	.64
Canberra	4.58	4.53	5.39	1.10	2.13	.97
Copenhagen	14.08	7.73	8.03	1.85	3.52	2.81
London	8.53	4.06	4.95	1.15	2.19	2.44
Mexico City	2.60	2.60	2.55	.71	3.08	.44
Ottawa	5.43	4.59	3.59	.82	2.64	1.74
Paris	8.11	5.75	9.40	1.34	3.86	2.49
Pretoria	3.70	2.68	3.30	.68	1.76	.75
Rome	8.65	4.61	4.59	1.41	3.97	1.73
Stockholm	12.32	6.01	7.19	1.68	3.14	4.23
The Hague	10.77	5.85	8.43	1.08	3.95	1.78
Tokyo	35.09	9.31	8.24	1.01	6.41	1.83
Washington	4.81	3.90	4.34	.73	3.40	2.01
Median	8.32	4.58	5.17	1.09	3.27	1.81

¹ 1 kilogram = 2.2046 pounds. Prices on May 3, 1978.

Briefings

RECENT REPORTS BY USDA OF ECONOMIC, MARKETING, AND RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING FARMERS.

LIVESTOCK AND BEEF PRICE DECLINE, A PASSING THING. . .Recent soft livestock prices should soon surface at super-markets; however, their stay will be short lived. USDA economists say the June declines in live cattle and wholesale beef prices should show up at the store if packers and retailers pass through the savings to shoppers. But the situation likely is temporary and consumer costs will hold well above last year's lows. The price drop for cattle and hogs doesn't accurately reflect supply/demand conditions. Beef supplies are actually running below year-earlier levels and pork production through year's end and the first half of '79 will rise slightly. . .factors that suggest prices will resume the upward trend underway from September '77 through May '78.

CHERRY OUTLOOK. . .Tart and sweet cherry production in 1978 will fall below last year's output. USDA's Crop Reporting Board expects 18% fewer tart cherries because of winter damage and spring freezes in Michigan, where three-quarters of the crop is grown. Nonetheless the forecast calls for nearly 80,000 metric tons, a 20% increase above 1976's severely cold-damaged crop. Sweet cherries, at 120,000 metric tons, are expected to decrease 10% from 1977 and 23% from 2 years ago. Wind, rain, and poor pollination caused sharp reductions in the three West Coast States, which produce three-fourths of the crop. Though eastern production looks bright, it won't be enough to offset the lowest sweet cherry harvest since 1972.

CRACKING DOWN ON PSEUDORABIES. . .USDA has licensed the first killed-virus vaccine to combat pseudorabies, a viral disease that causes high mortality in young pigs. The Animal Plant Health Inspection Service approved the vaccine for use in swine after reviewing federally required tests and production standards completed by the producer. Vaccination is recommended for young pigs 14 days or older with a repeat dose in 2 weeks. Boars should be revaccinated each year, and sows, 4 weeks and 2 weeks before farrowing. Distribution is limited to users approved by State animal health officials.

VEGETABLE MATTERS. . .U.S. farmers indicate they're under contract to put 1.66 million acres to processing vegetables this year, 1% below a year ago. The Crop Reporting Board estimates declines of 13% for tomatoes and spring spinach and 3% for sweet corn. On the plus side, contracted acreage for green lima beans may increase 12% while snap beans are expected to rise 7%. Forecasts also indicate 16% more beets for canning, 7% more cucumbers for pickles, 6% more cabbage for kraut, and a 4% upturn for green peas.

AMPLE WORLD GRAIN STOCKS. . .Global grain stocks stand at near-record levels as the 1978/79 crop year begins, with significant reserve increases in certain developing countries such as India. Favorable weather could force another sizable buildup in 1978/79, but bad weather could push stocks to the low levels of 1973-75. Despite large world harvests last season, record consumption and trade levels—coupled with the effects of U.S. reserve and loan programs—have helped world corn and wheat prices recover. In turn, U.S. export prices for these commodities have reached their highest marks in more than 2 years—good news since the U.S. holds about two-fifths of the world's wheat and coarse grain stocks. U.S. farm exports are expected to hit record levels during fiscal '78 as a slightly faster rate of economic growth in the developed countries strengthens foreign demand.

TOBACCO BUSINESS. . .During the 10 months ended last April, Americans smoked roughly the same number of cigarettes as a year earlier, but exports climbed 12%. Output for the year ending June 30, 1978, stood an estimated 1% above the 672 billion cigarettes manufactured in 1976/77. USDA economists say that steady sales in the U.S. and increased exports should encourage production during second-half 1978. But while the cigarette market remains stable, use of cigars and smoking tobacco continues below a year earlier. During 1977/78, use of large cigars slipped an estimated 5%, and small cigars, some 11%. Meantime, output of smokeless products—snuff and chewing tobacco—headed higher.

NAVAL STORES ROUNDUP. . .Manufacturers turned out less turpentine and rosin during the year beginning April 1, 1977, than the year before. According to the Crop Reporting Board, producers logged more than 477,500 barrels of turpentine, off 1% from the previous year. Turpentine stocks on March 31, 1978, totaled nearly 91,000 barrels, down 29% from the year before. Rosin output dipped 4% to 1.3 million drums, but stocks increased 28% as consumption declined to about 1.1 million drums.

IN THE GROUND. . .Farmers planted fewer acres to food and feed grains this year, but more land in oilseeds. The Crop Reporting Board estimates that feed grains were planted on 122 million acres, a drop of 5% from last season, while the roughly 72 million acres planted to food grains represented a 9% decline. In contrast, oilseed acreage climbed 6% to nearly 83 million, led by a 9% surge in soybeans to a record 64.3 million acres. Below are the particulars for 13 major crops and comparisons with 1977:

Crop	1977 Plantings	1978 Plantings	% Change From 1977
<i>1,000 acres</i>			
Corn	82,680	78,717	-5
Sorghum	16,994	16,546	-3
Oats	17,793	16,370	-8
Barley	10,586	9,925	-6
Winter wheat	55,980	48,001	-14
Durum wheat	3,183	4,110	+29
Other spring wheat	15,641	14,204	-9
Soybeans	59,080	64,293	+9
Cotton	13,695	13,147	-4
Rice	2,261	2,955	+31
Flaxseed	1,150	965	-36
Sugarbeets	1,275	1,324	+4
Sunflower seed	2,321	2,801	+21

'77 LIVESTOCK PRICES MIXED. . .Beef cattle prices received by producers averaged \$34.40 per cwt. for 1977, some slight gain over the \$33.70 of a year earlier and \$32.30 in 1975 but still short of '74 and '73 levels. Hog prices averaged \$39.40 last year, under the \$43.30 in 1976 and the \$46.10 for 1975. Sheep brought farmers an average of \$13.40 per cwt., the highest return on record. Broiler prices held steady with the 1976 figure of 23.6 cents per pound.

CORN AND WHEAT PRICES SOFTER IN '77. . .Prices received last year by corn and wheat farmers tumbled to their lowest readings in 5 years. Corn averaged \$2.03 per bushel, better than the \$1.57 for 1972, but below the \$2.15 of 1976 or any other recent season. Wheat farmers averaged \$2.31 last year, which continued the slide started at \$4.09 in 1974. The 1972 price was \$1.76.

Statistical Barometer

Item	1976	1977	1978—latest available data	
Farm Food Market Basket:¹				
Retail cost (1967=100)	175	179	198	May
Farm value (1967=100)	179	179	212	May
Farmer's share of retail cost (percent)	39	39	41	May
Agricultural Trade:				
Agricultural exports (\$bil.)	23	24	2.7	May
Agricultural imports (\$bil.)	11	13	1.3	May
Farm Income:				
Volume of farm marketings (1967=100)	121	124	96	April
Cash receipts from farm marketings (\$bil.)	94.3	95.0	100.9	(³)
Realized gross farm income (\$bil.)	103.6	106.1	113.3	(³)
Production expenses (\$bil.)	81.7	85.7	91.5	(³)
Realized net farm income (\$bil.)	21.9	20.4	21.8	(³)
Income and Spending:				
Disposable personal income (\$bil.)	1,185.8	1,309.2	1,402.1	(³)
Expenditures for food (\$bil.)	199.5	218.3	231.1	(³)
Hogs and Pigs:				
Hogs and pigs on farms, June 1 (mil.)	53.9	54.5	54.9	June
Kept for breeding (mil.)	8.4	8.7	8.8	June
Market (mil.)	45.5	45.8	46.1	June
Sows farrowing, Dec.-May	5.8	6.1	6.0	June
Pig crop, Dec.-May (mil.)	42.2	43.0	42.3	June
Pigs per litter, Dec.-May (no.)	7.3	7.1	7.0	June

¹Average annual quantities per family and single person households bought by wage and clerical workers, 1960-61, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics figures.

²Preliminary.

³Annual rate, seasonally adjusted, first quarter.



Crop
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AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

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DIANE DECKER, EDITOR

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