

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF PLANTED COTTON ACRES 1960-1996

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Abstract

Cotton has shifted from region to region over the years. This poster is a visual attempt to show those shifts. It also highlights some of the factors and issues affecting cotton planted acres in the U.S.

Acreage allotments were a limiting factor in the 1960's. They along with water deficiencies constrained the western half of the cotton belt. The 1970's saw abolishment of acreage allotments and new technology in irrigation that allowed the West to become a major cotton producing region. Keep in mind that this poster is on % planted acres. At the same time that the West was increasing, the Southeast was decreasing. This decrease can be contributed to production costs, yields and quality (insects were a major contributor of this). The 1970's also saw a large shift to man-made fibers. This resulted in low cotton prices. Therefore regions (like the Southeast) who had high costs and low yields had greater incentives to switch to their next alternative crop. With cotton prices low, exports increased, this gave even more advantage to the West because of shipping advantages and the consistent quality of their crop. The late 70's and early 80's brought high energy costs and inflation and lower profits per acre. This gave an advantage to larger farms. Here again favoring the West. A large portion of the smaller farms (which were typical of the eastern half of the cotton belt) became part-time farmers and therefore switched to less management intensive crops. The late 80's and early 90's have seen a renewed interest in cotton in the Southeast. This is largely due to the boll weevil eradication program that was started in North Carolina and Virginia in 1978 and has since spread through most of the southeastern region. The BWEP has lowered production costs to levels that again make cotton a major crop in the region. The 1990's are not finished yet, but several major factors are on the agenda. One of these is total boll weevil eradication and whether it will be adopted. Also a major factor already being used are the new Bt varieties. If this type study is again done 10 years from now these two items will most certainly be factors.