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Folder: OF 113-I Drought Disaster 1953 (1)

DROUGHT SITUATION, JUNE 25, 1953

A severe drought situation grips a large part of the central and southern Great Plains area. The severity varies within the area, as indicated on the accompanying map, which summarizes views of State Mobilization Committees in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas and BAE Statisticians in these and 3 other States:

Nebraska: A strip about 20 miles wide in 5 southwestern counties--Lincoln, Hayes, Chase, Dundy and Hitchcock--is affected, but not critically at present.

Kansas: Pastures are turning brown in many western and central counties, with some distress culling and movement of cattle. With wheat harvest about one-fourth completed, considerable shriveling and lower yields in late fields are in prospect. Both topsoil and subsoil moisture is deficient in the entire State, except in local areas, and stockwater is becoming a serious problem. Movement of cattle from the Flint Hills may be forced by mid-July.

Oklahoma: The entire western half of the State is seriously dry, particularly the Panhandle and extreme southwest. Considerable sorghum is planted and much more will be planted if rains fall by early July. A poor wheat crop is already harvested. Pastures and hay crops are very poor. Cattle marketings have been heavy since May 25. Much cotton in southern part is up to a fair stand but additional planting or replanting awaits rain.

Colorado: Drought conditions are most serious in the eastern half of the south-east quarter of Colorado. Wheat in that area is a near failure and conditions are unfavorable for planting sorghums. Pastures furnish little feed and some distress sales of cattle have already occurred. The sorghum crop will be very short.

New Mexico: The critical area covers most of the eastern third of the State, where the bulk of the State's broomcorn, sorghum and sudan is grown on non-irrigated land. Ranges along the western edge are also droughty. Some distress movement has occurred and sales of livestock at extremely low prices.

Texas: Roughly two-thirds of the State's wheat acreage is in the drought-stricken northwestern portion. Dryland wheat in the area has been a near failure for 4 consecutive years. The Plains area, particularly the southern High Plains, is suffering its third consecutive drought year. No general rain has occurred since September 1950, and except for November 1952, precipitation for the past 32 months has been below normal. Very little cotton planting was possible in the dry area. Farmers and ranchers are flooding central markets and auctions with cattle, as prospects for summer grass disappeared in the intense heat and lack of soil moisture.

Statistics on farms and livestock in the drought area covered by the State Mobilization Committees reports are as follows:

	Kansas	Oklahoma	Texas	
No. Counties in area	85	40	128	253
Farms with livestock	41,700	17,900	78,000	137,600
Dairy Farms	6,500	3,265	---	9,765
Cattle (other than dairy)	3,057,900	1,663,000	2,700,000	7,420,900
Dairy Cattle	428,000	265,000	---	693,000
Sheep and Lambs	563,000	124,000	4,000,000	4,687,000
Hogs and Pigs	901,900	320,000	---	---
Goats	---	---	1,000,000	1,216,900

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