Weather, Economy Affect State Agriculture in 1973

Figures Are Compiled by Extension Service

BATON ROUGE, La. — Weather and the economy combined in 1973 to make it an unusual year for Louisiana agriculture. In spite of reduced production, the state's farmers grossed a record $5.5 billion in farm income, an increase of more than $422 million over 1972.

Figures compiled by the LSU Cooperative Extension Service as part of its Giant Step II program to help improve the state's economy indicate that plant products grossed farmers some $1.07 billion and animal products grossed some $42 million. Animal production increased in value by $107 million over 1972 and plant production by $315 million.

Projections for last year's production value were much under actual values. In fact, it was not anticipated that Louisiana products would reach the current value level until 1977. These unusually high values were attributed to the worldwide food shortage that created a demand for agricultural products that far exceeded supply.

Extension economists are quick to point out, however, that future years will see a moderating price trend for farm products. In addition, production costs will be increasing from 20 to 30 per cent across the board.

Another consideration when computing agriculture's contribution to the state's economy is the "value added." This is the value generated by processing agricultural products within the state.

Agriculture contributed a total of $4.01 billion to the economy after "value added" figures were computed. This means that more than $2.5 billion was added to the economy by processing raw agricultural products.

Value added to plant products in Louisiana in 1973 was $2.2 billion, raising the total value to $3.3 billion for the state's economy. This represents an increase in total value of $1.2 billion over 1972.

The value added to animal science products in 1973 was $259.5 million, bringing the total value to $749.0 million. This was an increase of $161 million over 1973.

Most of the value added for processing in Louisiana was for forestry products. In fact, more than $1.96 billion of the total $2.5 billion was added for processing forest products. This reflects the extensive forest products industry in Louisiana.

Value added for processing these products brought the total for the industry to almost $2.2 billion.

Outstripping forest products at the farm was rice, with a gross value in Louisiana of $219.7 million, an increase of $68.3 million over 1972. The value added for processing brought the total for rice to $386.5 million in 1973.

Gross farm income from soybeans last year was $290 million, an increase of some $70 million. Value added for processing yielded some $206 million to the state's economy.

Cotton, one of the traditional agricultural leaders in Louisiana, came in third in gross income for agricultural crops, yielding some $151.4 million. This was an increase of $6.6 million over the value of 1972 production. Value added for processing was $15.1 million, bringing the total to $166.5 million.

Last year's production of sugarcane yielded some $106 million in gross farm income and $58.3 million in added value for a total of $164.2 million. The increase in gross farm income was $12.9 million over 1972.

Other plant crops that contributed to the state's economy were feed grains, hay, pecans, sweet potatoes, strawberries, ornamentals, citrus, peaches, miscellaneous fruit, horticultural crops, home vegetable gardens and home grounds.

Overall value added to animal products came to $259.5 million to yield the total $701.8 million. Producing the most farm income from animals was the category of cattle and calves with $220 million. The increase in gross farm income over the previous year was more than $600 million. Added value increased the worth of the cattle and calf industry to $266 million.

The milk industry yielded Louisiana farmers $94.7 million in gross farm income in 1973, an increase of $68 million over the previous year. With a value added for processing of $88.3 million, the total income for the milk industry was $183 million.

Louisiana's poultry industry had a gross farm income of $85.9 million in 1973. With an equal amount added for processing, the total value of the industry to the state's economy was $171.8 million. Other livestock industries rounding out the total value after processing were: swine—$19.3 million, horses—$19.7 million and sheep—$41.9 million.

Also included with livestock was income from the fisheries industry. Production of crawfish, catfish and bait fish yielded a total of $10.8 million in 1973, an increase of $1.4 million over 1972.