ECONOMIC AND OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO RANGE CATTLE RANCHES

By

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INTRODUCTION

New Mexico and Arizona are widely known for range cattle operations and the production of feeder and stocker calves. In 1959, 21 percent of all farms in New Mexico and Arizona were livestock ranches. These ranches contained over 88 percent of the land in farms (table 1). Over 64 percent of the 2 million head of cattle and calves in New Mexico and Arizona in 1959 were located on range cattle ranches. The value of cattle and calves sold in that year from farms and ranches in these two States amounted to almost $226 million. These sales comprised about 80 percent of the total value of all livestock and livestock products sold in these States, and 38 percent of all crops and livestock sold during this period.

In 1959 the average ranch in New Mexico and Arizona was 10,320 acres (exclusive of public land), with an average investment per ranch in land and buildings of $140,906, and an average of $12,705 in livestock (table 2). Average gross sales per ranch amounted to $22,651.

Many ranchers in New Mexico and Arizona use public land under grazing permits. The majority of these permits are issued by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The Federal ranges are grazed under regulations as to seasons of use, number of livestock, and the grazing period. Federal grazing land amounts to about 39 percent of the total land in the two-State area.

There is great variation in types of range in Arizona and New Mexico, also in types and sizes of cattle ranch operations. Incomes among ranches vary because of differences in productivity of range types, and because of differences in organization and costs. Annual variations in ranch income are due to variations in livestock prices and trends in costs and range conditions.

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