

Kansas Field Crops



Saline County Crops

1872 and 2004

Even though much of Saline County had yet to be settled in 1872, agriculture statistics were already being recorded. Corn was the most popular crop for the first few years but by 1875 wheat had over taken it in acres planted, Tellingly, Turkey Red Winter Wheat was introduced to the area in 1874, making for better quality and higher yields .

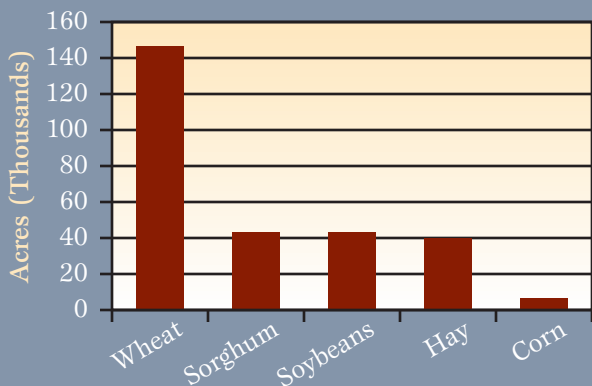
Along with wheat and corn other important crops during Saline County's early years were hay, oats, barley, rye, and even Irish potatoes.

While some crops in Saline County have declined in importance others have gained. In 2004 almost 22,000 acres of sorghum and 21,000 acres of soybeans were planted.

Hay production has been one of the county's most important crops through the years. At more than 21,000 acres harvested in 2004, Saline County is one of the state's leaders.

Saline County Agricultural Statistics 1872 and 2004			
1872	Crop	Percent	Acres Planted
	Hay	40	14,828
	Corn	29	10,678
	Wheat	20	7,432
	Oats	9	3,123
	Rye	2	550
2004	Crop	Percent	Acres Planted
	Wheat	69	144,300
	Sorghum	10	21,900
	Soybeans	10	21,000
	Hay	10	20,100
	Corn	1	2,900

2004 Saline County Crops



80 Years Of Saline County Wheat Production

Year	Acres Planted
1926	165,000
1936	173,000
1946	170,000
1956	126,000
1966	131,000
1976	180,000
1986	150,000
1996	131,700
2004	144,300

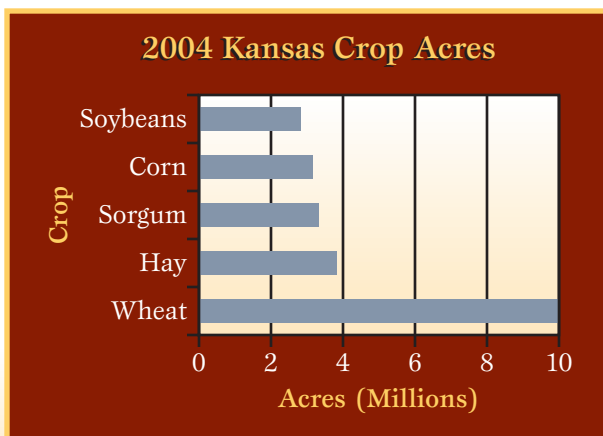
Farming In Kansas

More Than Wheat

Kansas has been one of the nation's leading agricultural producers from its earliest settlement in the 1860s and 1870s. The 2002 the USDA Census of Agriculture reported 64,000 Kansas farms totaling more than 47 million acres with nearly 30 million acres of cropland. The average Kansas farm that year had 733 total acres.

Best known for wheat production, Kansas farmers have found that it can be important to grow other crops too. Driving across Kansas its common to see fields of sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, oats, barley, alfalfa, and many other crops, even canola.

Farms and farm equipment have changed since pioneer times but Kansas farmers continue their tradition of hard work, high productivity, and progress.



Alfalfa

Kansas is consistently one of the nation's top alfalfa hay producers annually producing more than 4 million tons of the crop.

Averaging hay production from 1998-2002, Kansas ranked fifth in the nation.

Alfalfa is grown throughout the state as either a dry land or irrigated crop. Used almost exclusively as a livestock feed, it can be grazed in the alfalfa field or cut, baled, and used later. The large bales are often sold as a cash crop and transported to livestock feeders. Alfalfa can also be dehydrated and fed in pellet form.

People use alfalfa in the form of alfalfa sprouts for salads and as a nutritional supplement. Researchers are experimenting with industrial uses for alfalfa including as a fuel for the production of electric energy.



Corn

Corn is one of Kansas' most important crops and has been since pioneer days. In fact, until 1914, more acres of corn were planted than wheat. Even now, Kansas corn fields annually yield more than four hundred million bushels of corn.

Planted in early spring, corn's growth cycle takes it through the summer and into autumn when it ripens from dark green to gold. Because of inconsistent rainfall more than 60% of the state's three million acre corn crop is irrigated. Irrigated corn can produce yields of more than two hundred bushels an acre.

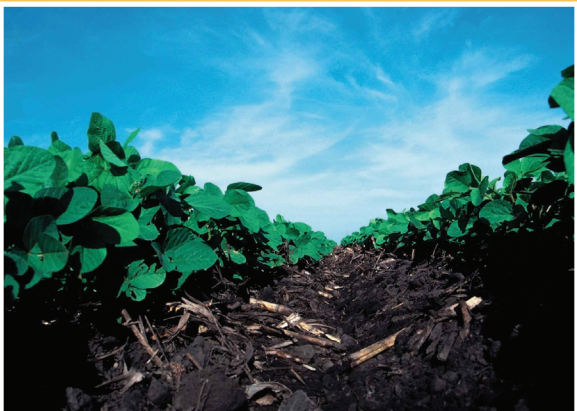
Although Kansas farmers grow sweet corn and popcorn, most cornfields produce yellow dent corn or what is more commonly called field corn. Field corn is used primarily as feed for livestock although there other uses are being developed.



Soybeans

Over the last 25 years soybean acres have increased dramatically. Whether through irrigation in the western part of the state or dry land farming further east, more farmers are turning to soybeans as an alternative to the more traditional corn or sorghum. Soybeans are planted in the spring and harvested in the fall.

Because of high protein content, most soybean production goes to livestock feed. New industrial uses for soybeans are being developed including biodeisel, soybean based lubricants and cleaners, and as a substitute for other petroleum-based products. Humans have used soybean products for many years through soy sauce, tofu, soy flour, and soy milk.



Wheat

Kansas is called the Wheat State for good reason. It is the nation's leader in wheat production. Wheat is more than just a field crop statistic in Kansas, it's part of our culture and our identity. Across the state, media annually highlight wheat harvest and provide updates throughout the year about the crop's progress. Football fans from cities as well as farms "wave the wheat" after touchdowns. It's all an important part of what makes us Kansans.

Most wheat grown in Kansas is Hard Red Winter wheat, directly descended from the Turkey Red wheat brought to Kansas in 1874 by Russian Mennonite immigrants. Winter wheat is planted and comes up in the fall, lies dormant during the winter and begins growing again in the spring. As the weather warms it matures, ripens, and is harvested, usually in late June.

Over a five year period, Kansas has produced an average of 374 million bushels of wheat from 9 million acres planted, more than any other state in the nation. Kansas is also first in wheat flour milling, wheat exports, and wheat storage.

Wheat is usually ground into flour and used by bakeries for bread and other food products. It is also used as livestock feed.



Grain Sorghum

(Milo)

For the years 1998-2002 Kansas ranked first in the country in sorghum production. Sorghum (commonly called milo) is a feed crop grown by farmers throughout the state. It is planted in the spring and harvested in the fall. It has maintained its popularity because it grows well in most soils and doesn't need as much water as some other crops.

Sorghum looks much like corn during its early stages. As it ripens in the late summer and fall it turns into a beautiful red or brown.

In the United States sorghum is primarily a livestock feed grain. Because it has much the same nutritional value, some livestock feeders use it in place of corn. In other parts of the world however, it is an important part of the human diet in the form of porridge, cakes, and malted beverages.



Photograph Courtesy of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Barley

Barley's importance to Kansas farmers has diminished as other crops, like soybeans and sorghum, have gained popularity. As late as 1942 over 1.7 million acres were planted to barley in Kansas but by the year 2000, acres planted had fallen to 8,000.

Kansas barley is planted in the fall and harvested the next summer. Today, most of America's barley is grown in the Northern Plains and Pacific Northwest where cooler climates are more suitable to spring planting and fall harvest.

Barley's primary uses are for animal feed and human consumption. It is used in soups and is sometimes milled into flour. One of its most common uses is as malt used in the production of beer and hard liquors.



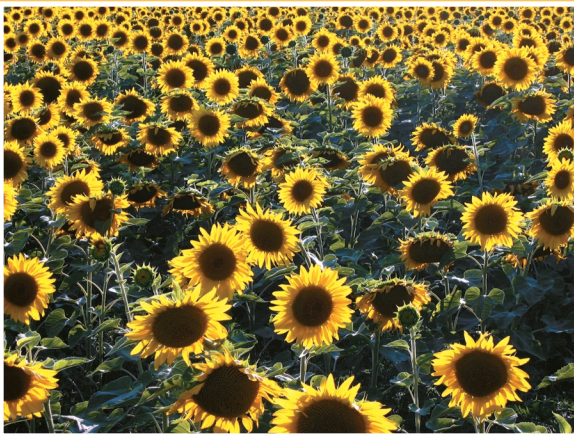
Sunflowers

Not only is the sunflower, Kansas' state flower, seen growing wild across the state, but it is also an important field crop.

In 2004 Kansas farmers planted more than 170,000 acres of sunflowers. Planted in the spring and harvested in the fall, sunflowers are grown throughout the state.

Although sunflowers are native to the Americas they first became an important crop in Russia and have since become popular in the United States because of their high nutritional value. Sunflower seeds are high in vitamins, minerals, and essential acids.

Products from the sunflower include cooking oil, snack foods, as a biodiesel additive, for livestock feed, and birdseed. With Americans spending more than 12 billion dollars a year on birdseed, the market should remain strong for years.



Oats

As with barley and rye, oats were at one time a major Kansas crop. Many farmers used oats as livestock feed but with increased mechanization and specialization, milk cows and workhorses disappeared from Kansas farms. When they disappeared so did much of the market for Kansas oats.

Even though oat acreage has decreased Kansas still produces about 2.5 million bushels a year from 65,000 acres planted. Central Kansas ranks second in the state in oat production so the crop continues to be relatively important in the Salina area.

Planted in the spring and harvested in late summer, Kansas oats are used primarily as a feed grain although other uses include hot and ready to eat cereals and granola bars.



Photograph Courtesy of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



The Smoky Hill Museum is a division of the Salina Arts & Humanities Commission, a department of the City of Salina.