

**100
Years
of
Farmland
Values
in
Kansas**

Bulletin 611
September 1977
Agricultural Experiment Station
Kansas State University, Manhattan
Floyd W. Smith, director

100 Years of Farm Land Values in Kansas¹

by

Wilfred H. Pine²

Kansas has approximately 47.5 million acres in farms, valued at \$18 billion (\$381 per acre) in 1977.³ In 1880, 21.4 million acres were in farms, valued at \$0.2 billion (based on a census value of \$11 per acre), only slightly more than 1 percent of dollar value in 1977.

The Census of Agriculture has provided farm-land values on a county basis since 1870 and on a state basis since 1860. Pressly and Scofield, who used census reports to assemble and publish values for 1850 to 1959, explained that the values per acre as published by the Bureau of Census included land and improvements and were current market values (dollars at the date of the census).⁴ All farms were enumerated until 1950, after which values were estimated from samples of farms.

This bulletin presents farm-land value data and brief explanations of trends dating back approximately 100 years.

State Trends

Based on census reports, average value for farmland in Kansas increased from \$7 per acre in 1860 to \$19 by 1890, but then decreased to \$15 by 1900 (Figure 1). The 1890s were not good years for Kansas farmers. Wheat yields were particularly low in 1893, 1894, and 1895 and prices of wheat were 42, 44, and 45 cents per bushel for those years—record lows except for 1931 and 1932 (Table 1 and Figure 1).⁵ Although corn yields were reasonably good in the mid 1890s (24.5 bushels per acre in 1895 and 28.0 in 1896), prices for those years were 19 and 18 cents per bushel. Also, cattle prices were low in the early 1890s—inventory value being as low as \$16.80 per head in January 1893 (Table 1 and Figure 1).⁶

1. Contribution no. 78-29-B. Department of Agricultural Economics, Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station, Manhattan. Except as noted, land-value data were taken from Pressly and Scofield, *Farm Real Estate Values in the United States by Counties, 1850-1959*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1965.

2. Economist, Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station.

3. Acreage, 1974 Census of Agriculture; and value per acre, *Farm Real Estate Market Developments*, March, 1977.

4. In *Farm Real Estate Values in the United States by Counties, 1850-1959*.

5. Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 58th. Annual Report, 1975, Topeka.

6. Kansas Board of Agriculture, *Price Patterns*, 1957, Topeka.

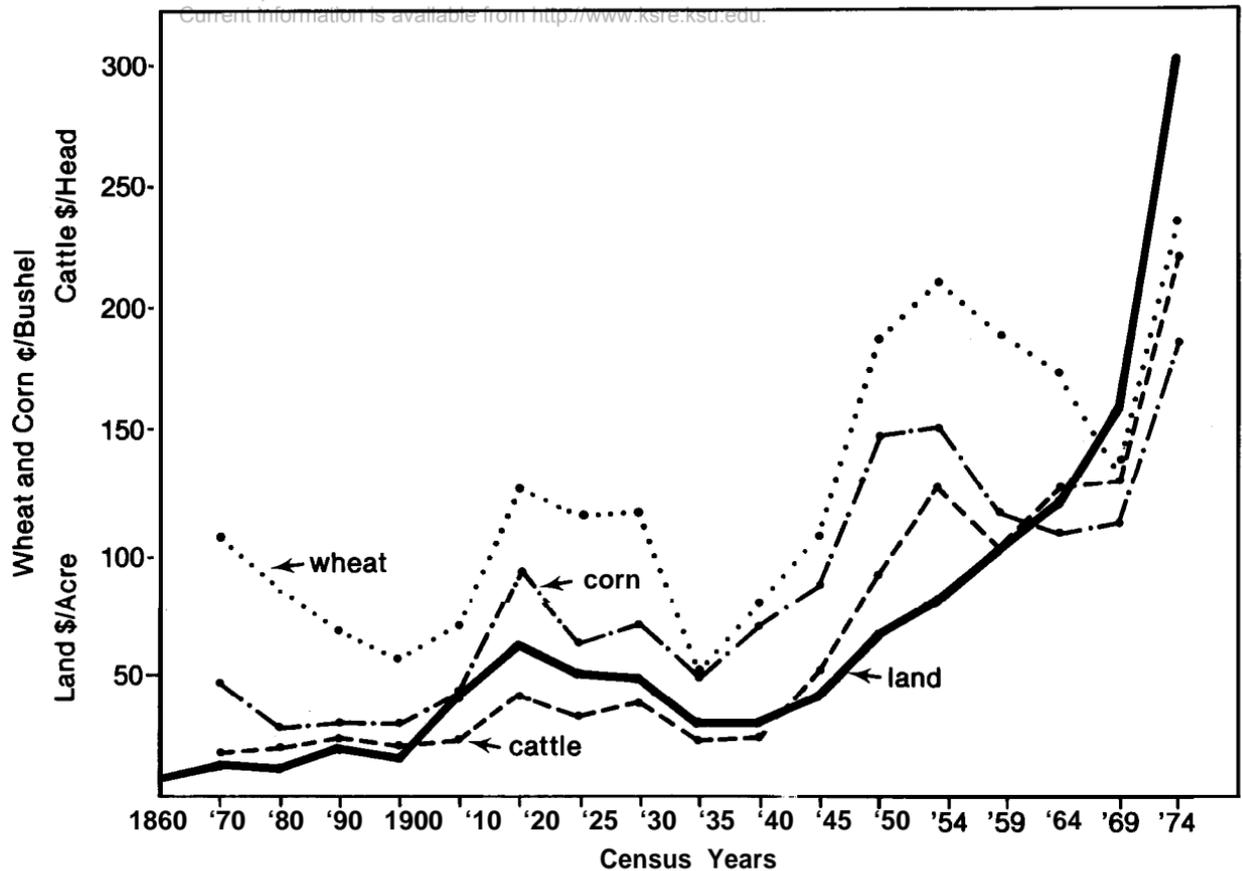


Figure 1. Farm land values and prices (average of years since preceding census) for wheat and corn and inventory value of cattle 1860 to 1974, Kansas. (Sources: Bureau of Census and Kansas State Board of Agriculture.)

Table 1. Yields and prices of wheat and corn and inventory value of cattle from 1870 to 1974 in Kansas.¹

	Wheat		Corn		Cattle ²
	Yield(bu)	Price(\$)	Yield(bu)	Price(\$)	\$/head
1870	15.5	1.07	31.3	.48	19
1880	14.1	.86	29.7	.29	20
1890	14.1	.69	28.6	.30	24
1900	13.3	.57	21.2	.30	20
1910	14.0	.71	22.4	.43	23
1920	13.2	1.29	15.5	.94	42
1925	13.4	1.16	22.5	.65	34
1930	12.8	1.18	19.9	.72	39
1935	12.6	.57	13.3	.50	28
1940	11.1	.83	12.9	.71	29
1945	15.8	1.09	23.6	.87	51
1950	15.9	1.90	24.7	1.49	92
1954	15.7	2.12	25.5	1.53	129
1959	19.7	1.92	32.6	1.19	104
1964	24.4	1.76	47.1	1.09	127
1969	24.0	1.35	68.4	1.14	130
1974	33.1	2.37	87.8	1.87	221

1. Yields and values for each census year are averages for years since preceding Census. Data from Kansas State Board of Agriculture: 58th Annual Report, 1975; and Price Patterns, 1957.

2. Inventory value January 1.

From 1900 to 1920 land values moved up rapidly, reaching \$62 per acre, a four-fold increase in 20 years. The price of wheat reached \$2.14 in 1919, a high not exceeded until 1947. Prices of corn and cattle followed the same pattern. But the next 20 years, 1920 to 1940, the average per-acre value of farmland decreased 50 percent, which was associated with sharp declines in prices and the drought of the 1930s. Land values rose nearly threefold during the next 15 years, 1940 to 1955 (1954 census), a period of increasing yields and crop and livestock prices. During the next 15 years (1955 to 1970) land values doubled, even though prices of wheat, corn, and cattle declined and dry weather had cut yields early in the period. New technology, farm enlargement, and other factors were involved.

During the 5 years from 1969 to 1974 land values doubled, reaching an average of \$301 per acre. Exceptional yields and high prices associated with general inflation, new technology, investment in farmland as a hedge against inflation, increase in export demand, farm enlargement, desire of the urban employed to live in the country, and other factors have strongly pressured land values upward.

The strength in the farm real estate market slackened in late 1976 and early 1977, however, as a result of lowered prices of major farm products (decrease in foreign demand) and dry years. High energy costs may now be discouraging country living and high input costs are helping to reduce farm income. Some farmers are approaching financial difficulties, particularly cash-flow problems.

Country and Area Trends

Land values for Kansas counties were first reported by the 1870 census, though not until 1890 were values reported for all 105 counties as they are now organized (Table 2). Shawnee County had the highest average value (\$36) in 1870; the capitol city and Kansas River land probably accounted for that. Since 1870 counties near Kansas City and Wichita have had the largest increases in land values. For example, values in the northeastern Kansas counties of Johnson, Jefferson, and Jackson were about the same in 1870, but by 1974 the value in Johnson county (which includes a major portion of Kansas City, Kansas) was about three times that of either Jefferson or Jackson county.

In central Kansas, values in Sedgwick county (which includes Wichita) and Ottawa County were the same in 1870, but by 1974 farmland in Sedgwick County was worth twice that in Ottawa County. Irrigation in western Kansas and mineral resources in various areas have affected counties differently. Land value in Brown County (which was considered the best corn county in the state) in 1920 was \$202 far greater than that in any other county except Wyandotte (including much of Kansas City). In 1974 Brown County farmland had a value \$460; however, several other counties had higher values and since 1920 the increase in land value in Brown County has not been so large as that in some other counties, for example, Douglas (from \$109 to \$499) and Leavenworth (from \$107 to \$538) counties.

Haskell County, a highly irrigated county, moved from \$18 per acre in 1940 to \$471 in 1974. The Greeley County value was \$7 in 1940 and \$238 in 1974. Kearny County values were \$11 in 1940 and \$250 in 1974.

To gain a picture of changes in land values throughout the state, I grouped the counties into the 9 crop-reporting districts (Figure 2),⁷ then weighted the value for each county in that district by the acreage in farms reported in the Census of Agriculture, beginning with 1880. I found the overall trends in the crop-reporting districts to be similar (Table 3). The increases were more gradual in the western than in the eastern districts until recent years. Percentage increases from 1969 to 1974 were greater in the western, south-central, and southeastern districts than in the other districts. In 1974 values per acre were about \$100 more in the eastern than in the western districts.

Large increases in feed production through irrigation, accompanied by feedlots and associated agri-businesses, contributed to the sharp increase from 1969 to 1974 in western Kansas. Urban influences helped to boost prices in south-central Kansas. Area development and "catching up" of land prices likely affected the increase in southeastern Kansas.

The usual factors (prices, yields, and costs of inputs) affecting dollar incomes to land owners and such outside factors as the use of rural land as a hedge against inflation or a place to live and play will determine future trends in land values. General inflation and cost of energy quite likely will be major factors.

7. Statistical Division, Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Topeka.

Table 2. Average dollar value per acre for farmland and improvements for Kansas counties and the state, by census year from 1870 to 1974.¹

	1870	80	90	1900	10	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	54	59	64	69	74
Allen	20	12	20	21	49	71	58	47	34	29	87	63	73	100	118	179	315
Anderson	12	14	21	28	42	68	50	45	30	24	34	50	65	91	115	188	337
Atchison	21	23	37	39	80	142	109	87	48	48	59	87	87	118	145	219	366
Barber	--	4	12	5	23	37	28	28	20	23	30	44	62	79	103	120	257
Barton	--	8	14	15	57	77	71	75	47	52	77	111	128	146	165	179	298
Bourbon	19	14	21	19	37	69	50	37	26	23	31	46	56	72	90	155	310
Brown	19	20	37	47	97	202	144	116	75	64	85	130	143	162	194	265	460
Butler	8	12	18	15	40	59	47	45	26	33	41	66	87	109	133	178	346
Chase	17	15	16	13	29	66	46	44	25	26	35	53	68	84	104	118	225
Chautauqua	--	8	13	10	21	36	29	26	14	17	20	34	44	61	85	111	270
Cherokee	9	10	22	22	38	71	54	42	24	25	34	52	70	106	135	181	359
Cheyenne	--	2	7	3	14	37	29	26	16	17	31	49	57	78	89	108	217
Clark	--	3	8	2	16	28	22	23	18	14	21	42	53	61	77	94	138
Clay	8	10	22	20	57	86	69	60	42	41	48	73	90	108	140	170	287
Cloud	6	10	19	18	57	79	62	60	39	38	50	69	80	100	122	167	280
Coffey	18	15	22	20	42	70	67	48	30	29	35	55	67	104	109	155	288
Comanche	--	3	8	3	16	38	24	29	19	18	26	49	59	69	82	121	171
Cowley	4	10	21	17	38	70	54	50	31	35	38	65	92	125	134	192	345
Crawford	11	12	27	25	48	69	51	43	28	25	35	53	62	76	115	165	334
Decatur	--	3	8	7	22	34	32	32	22	16	27	42	63	75	88	104	227
Dickinson	11	14	26	20	60	111	79	82	51	51	63	96	100	122	140	177	284
Doniphan	26	20	31	43	81	162	119	104	66	56	67	91	104	140	154	244	439
Douglas	31	23	33	33	57	109	88	77	50	48	58	82	104	145	185	295	499
Edwards	--	5	10	6	42	57	52	53	35	33	52	79	92	103	124	150	315
Elk	--	8	15	12	29	46	39	33	17	18	25	42	57	71	82	126	233
Ellis	--	6	10	10	28	41	40	40	24	24	35	58	74	100	101	116	218
Ellsworth	6	8	16	19	41	62	54	54	35	36	50	63	84	84	116	128	232
Finney	--	--	9	3	20	22	23	27	20	14	24	60	71	92	118	173	324
Ford	--	5	10	3	30	46	38	47	32	26	41	80	86	107	125	154	261
Franklin	21	17	25	27	52	86	73	63	39	36	46	62	81	119	139	214	405
Geary	--	--	19	18	37	69	62	59	40	35	42	56	85	114	131	167	266
Gove	--	2	6	4	17	21	23	24	17	13	23	43	53	67	88	96	214
Graham	--	2	8	6	22	29	27	24	16	13	21	34	46	62	82	95	207
Grant	--	--	6	3	9	17	22	35	22	16	28	65	78	96	127	165	361
Gray	--	--	6	5	17	28	25	38	24	20	34	58	77	91	108	161	370
Greeley	--	--	5	3	9	16	20	17	11	7	13	49	59	67	103	110	238
Greenwood	13	8	17	14	31	52	41	40	21	22	27	46	62	72	92	121	235
Hamilton	--	--	6	5	15	13	17	18	10	7	14	43	43	59	74	98	175
Harper	--	5	16	10	43	66	47	52	35	41	55	86	109	136	168	219	436

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Table 2. Continued

	1870	80	90	1900	10	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	54	59	64	69	74
Harvey	--	12	26	23	71	102	84	84	57	70	87	124	155	177	214	290	515
Haskell	--	--	5	3	11	21	20	38	23	18	37	86	100	113	151	203	471
Hodgeman	--	3	7	3	19	28	25	31	18	15	31	59	59	78	102	122	211
Jackson	20	17	26	29	60	98	75	66	41	33	39	58	66	83	108	170	293
Jefferson	22	20	27	30	64	107	80	68	46	40	48	82	89	11	170	242	420
Jewell	2	8	17	18	54	72	57	52	33	26	36	54	64	72	105	141	257
Johnson	23	23	40	46	106	151	149	136	91	75	101	155	180	306	342	590	1081
Kearny	--	3	7	5	16	21	19	20	14	11	18	47	51	68	88	98	250
Kingman	--	4	14	10	40	61	40	48	33	40	52	73	97	117	139	185	358
Kiowa	--	--	9	4	31	48	36	39	22	23	34	51	66	86	100	110	210
Labette	9	13	21	20	39	68	47	40	25	28	37	50	69	92	94	89	359
Lane	--	2	5	4	15	23	21	25	19	13	28	63	74	80	103	133	208
Leavenworth	29	21	33	37	60	107	87	76	45	51	52	81	92	135	177	288	538
Lincoln	5	8	13	12	39	62	51	51	30	27	40	62	72	84	113	130	244
Linn	17	12	21	20	36	65	45	41	27	23	30	47	60	80	102	184	302
Logan	--	--	7	3	13	15	18	16	12	8	13	37	46	55	77	85	175
Lyon	23	17	21	20	42	80	63	57	34	33	39	69	75	104	121	166	286
McPherson	6	11	21	21	61	109	80	83	53	64	81	125	137	172	173	245	472
Marion	13	14	22	18	56	95	72	75	42	46	55	88	99	120	149	192	334
Marshall	10	14	23	28	69	111	84	80	52	43	55	84	82	109	116	178	325
Meade	--	2	6	3	20	27	23	33	19	19	29	65	62	78	97	125	232
Miami	21	17	28	28	51	88	69	57	39	31	45	61	86	117	157	268	540
Mitchell	3	9	17	16	49	71	60	55	36	33	48	74	85	108	140	166	301
Montgomery	5	12	21	20	39	64	49	42	28	31	39	57	78	102	123	180	353
Morris	1	11	20	16	44	78	62	54	32	33	38	82	72	97	115	147	260
Morton	--	--	5	3	9	19	16	22	14	8	18	49	65	89	92	101	201
Nemaha	12	15	28	33	84	130	85	84	57	46	62	83	88	116	126	209	324
Neosho	11	11	20	20	41	68	49	43	26	29	33	55	64	95	126	191	337
Ness	--	2	7	3	18	31	30	34	21	18	32	64	65	77	95	106	256
Norton	--	3	10	8	27	40	35	33	20	17	22	38	47	61	80	97	203
Osage	12	15	23	22	43	74	58	58	35	31	37	60	69	99	109	167	319
Osborne	2	6	11	10	34	51	46	38	23	21	34	47	62	69	98	124	214
Ottawa	7	10	18	16	43	71	56	49	32	38	47	71	88	113	133	162	283
Pawnee	--	6	12	8	49	69	56	56	39	40	60	97	115	129	144	174	305
Phillips	--	5	11	11	33	48	40	35	24	18	28	38	49	56	78	117	200
Pottawatomie	18	14	19	24	45	74	60	58	36	32	40	58	79	101	114	150	276
Pratt	--	4	11	3	55	73	51	58	37	43	62	87	117	128	133	157	313
Rawlins	--	2	7	4	17	33	30	31	19	19	25	51	63	77	99	100	206
Reno	--	8	19	16	59	89	68	74	49	62	74	112	149	154	99	94	395
Republic	5	9	22	23	96	95	80	76	45	38	47	79	85	101	132	199	331
Rice	3	10	20	19	58	90	71	72	47	54	76	96	130	143	162	184	351

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Riley	18	12	20	20	47	79	69	71	40	39	52	79	81	122	143	184	323
Rooks	--	4	9	7	32	44	36	29	19	18	28	49	55	68	85	105	203
Rush	--	4	9	9	37	51	49	52	38	33	45	77	98	102	125	135	262
Russell	--	7	11	11	35	47	40	40	27	27	41	60	74	83	101	117	211
Saline	10	15	24	19	51	99	77	70	44	47	75	104	112	137	163	181	304
Scott	--	--	4	3	16	21	23	21	16	13	24	65	77	88	147	161	308
Sedwick	7	13	29	25	76	111	92	102	64	71	90	139	185	211	247	330	569
Seward	--	--	7	2	14	24	24	30	19	14	29	56	58	77	101	148	385
Shawnee	36	26	43	34	69	122	98	92	67	60	69	91	118	169	197	277	442
Sheridan	--	2	6	5	21	30	30	29	20	15	26	50	61	78	103	126	265
Sherman	--	--	6	3	13	27	29	23	15	11	23	39	67	77	111	144	339
Smith	4	6	13	12	41	67	49	45	30	18	31	36	57	76	90	124	290
Stafford	--	4	10	10	51	79	61	64	46	46	69	89	106	119	136	182	318
Stanton	--	--	5	4	8	20	16	23	15	8	24	61	56	92	108	132	305
Stevens	--	--	5	3	11	30	25	30	22	14	24	64	71	94	107	164	341
Sumner	--	9	21	18	50	85	62	63	43	47	61	88	123	161	191	242	489
Thomas	--	2	6	4	19	30	27	29	20	15	25	59	72	83	98	129	316
Trego	--	4	7	6	21	30	28	31	21	16	29	50	62	65	96	98	216
Wabaunsee	11	10	19	17	38	63	56	51	30	26	36	52	70	83	98	138	257
Wallace	--	3	6	3	11	18	18	16	8	6	11	31	38	45	73	94	190
Washington	9	11	21	24	58	84	66	63	41	38	45	62	75	97	113	162	346
Wichita	--	--	4	3	11	16	16	18	11	9	21	62	73	105	139	162	326
Wilson	11	12	20	17	35	62	45	40	23	26	33	49	73	96	114	160	304
Woodson	12	12	16	17	34	57	47	36	23	21	27	44	64	77	102	154	261
Wyandotte	31	39	118	106	193	210	255	254	141	197	164	280	330	509	438	702	1194
State	13	11	19	15	40	62	50	49	31	30	41	66	80	100	122	159	301

1. 1870 to 1959: from Pressly and Scofield, *Farm Real Estate Values in the United States by Counties, 1850-1959*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1965 to 1974 taken from *Census of Agriculture*.

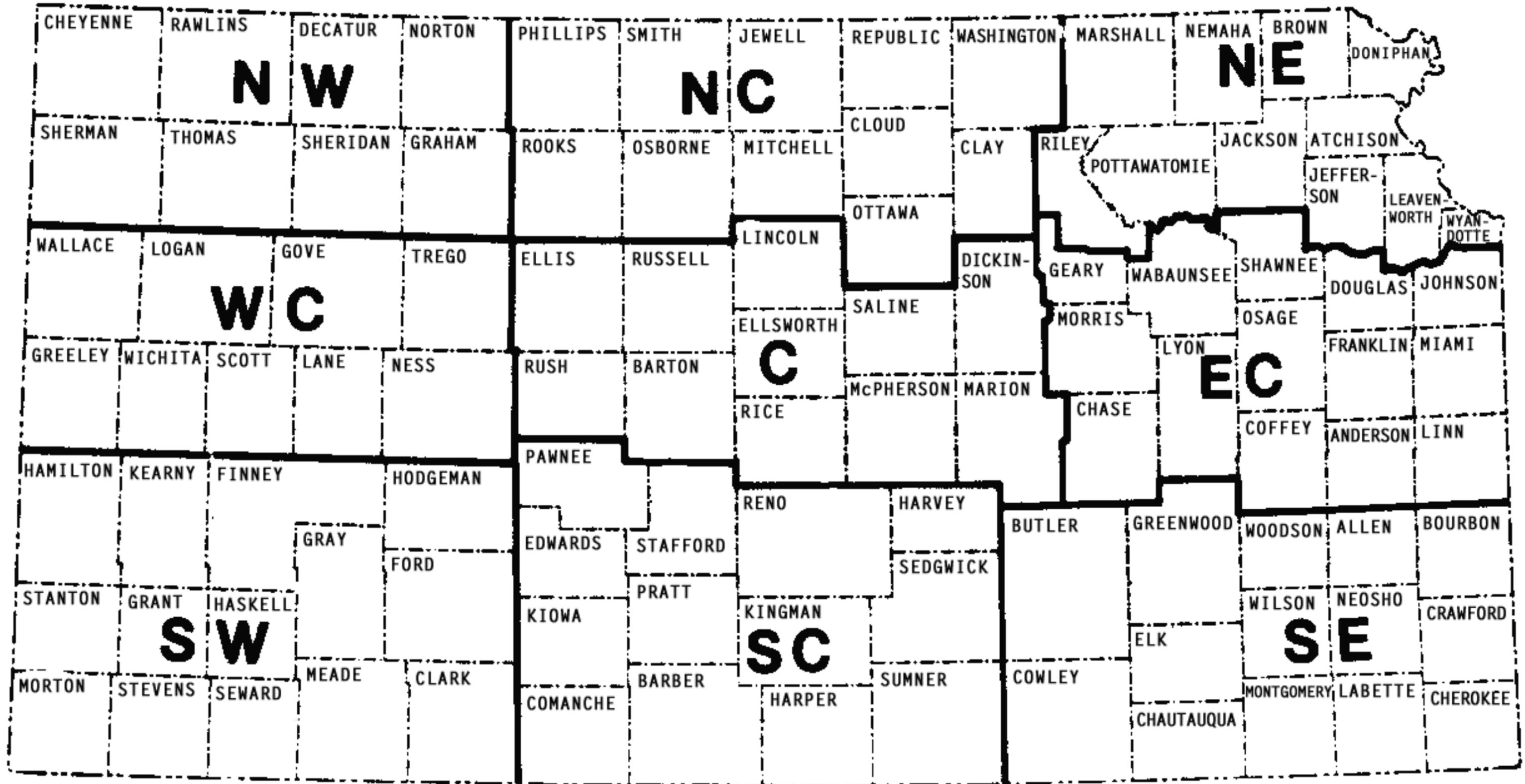


Figure 2. Crop-reporting districts, Kansas.

Table 3. Value per acre of farmland and improvements in Kansas for census years 1880 to 1974, by crop-reporting district and for the state.¹

	NW	WC	SW	NC	C	SC	NE	EC	SE	STATE
1880	\$ 3	\$ 3	\$ 4	\$ 8	\$ 10	\$ 8	\$ 18	\$ 17	\$ 11	\$ 11
1890	7	6	7	17	18	18	29	25	19	19
1900	5	4	3	16	16	14	33	24	17	15
1910	20	16	18	47	47	49	69	47	37	40
1920	32	22	27	69	77	75	118	83	61	62
1925	30	23	24	55	62	54	91	69	48	50
1930	28	24	31	50	64	58	82	61	41	49
1935	18	16	20	32	40	39	51	38	25	31
1940	15	12	15	29	42	43	46	35	27	30
1945	25	22	27	39	58	58	57	44	33	41
1950	46	51	60	58	85	86	83	67	53	66
1954	60	60	66	70	102	111	92	81	71	80
1959	75	72	85	86	119	134	121	113	92	100
1964	94	101	104	111	138	143	143	134	112	122
1969	113	114	137	146	164	179	211	200	156	159
1974	250	234	276	269	294	361	367	365	312	301

1. County values weighted by acres in farms.

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