

South Dakota IRRIGATION FARMS

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SOUTH DAKOTA FARMS UTILIZING IRRIGATION DOWN

SIoux FALLS, November 18, 1999 – The recently released 1998 Farm and Ranch Irrigation Survey indicates a continued downward trend in South Dakota farms utilizing irrigation, but only a marginal decrease in acres, according to USDA's South Dakota Agricultural Statistics Service. The current survey recorded 981 farms with irrigated acres in 1998 compared to 1,208 in 1994 and 1,572 in 1988, years when comparable studies were conducted. There were 297,205 acres under irrigation in 1998, down only 2% from 4 years earlier and 18% from 1988. Nearly all the irrigated acreage was devoted to harvested cropland, with only 8,643 acres used for pasture or other uses. Producers harvested 123,312 acres of corn, 60,162 acres of alfalfa hay, and 54,064 acres of soybeans as the three most popular irrigated crops in 1998.

Sprinkler and gravity flow systems were the two most common methods used to distribute the irrigation water. There were 586 farms utilizing sprinkler systems to irrigate 199,855 acres, while 481 farms used gravity flow systems to irrigate 98,292 acres. Drip or trickle methods were used by 24 farms to distribute water, while 5 farms were able to rely on subirrigation. Center pivots were by far the most popular of the various kinds of sprinkler systems with 525 farms using them to irrigate 196,314 acres.

There were 129 farms with irrigated acreage in 1997 that discontinued irrigation in 1998. The combined total area was 22,174 acres. Reasons for no irrigation in 1998 included: 18 farms (2,214 acres) reported they were no longer going to irrigate, 56 farms (12,414 acres) with sufficient soil moisture, 14 farms (1,592 acres) with a shortage of surface water, 11 farms (1,794 acres) reporting it was uneconomical, and 52 farms (8,548 acres) converting to an agricultural enterprise that does not require irrigation.

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