Changes From Prior Censuses

Increased fertilizer use probably has contributed greatly to the phenomenal gains in yields for many crops. Information on extent and level of fertilizer use provides important measures of changes in farm technology as well as a basis for projecting changes in crop yields and crop production.

According to data shown in table 10, the number of farms reporting fertilizer has decreased in each of the last three censuses; however, the percent of all farms has increased. Much of this decrease is accounted for by the decrease in total farms.

The tonnage of fertilizer used on class 1-5 farms increased over 20 percent from 1964 to 1969. The quantity of fertilizer used in 1969 was almost one and three-quarters times the amount used 15 years earlier, and 50 percent more than the amount used 10 years earlier. In addition, sources other than the census data indicate that the primary plant nutrient content of commercial fertilizer has been increasing at a rapid rate during this time period. Census data show that much of the additional tonnage of fertilizer is being applied to crops in areas which in the past have not used extensive amounts of fertilizer. For example, there were large increases in the acreages fertilized for sorghums and soybeans between 1964 and 1969. Table 11 shows changes in total tons of fertilizer used on class 1-5 farms since 1954.

There has been a significant increase in the use of liquid fertilizing materials in recent years. Liquid fertilizing material used on class 1-5 farms in 1969 totaled 5.6 million tons, compared with 3.0 million tons used in 1964. The data show an increase in the tonnage of liquid materials in each of the 50 States between 1954 and 1969. Table 12 presents the changes in tonnage used for class 1-5 farms since 1959.

Use on Selected Crops

There are four items on usages of fertilizer for which comparable data are available for class 1-5 farms for the past four censuses. These items, together with the pertinent data, are shown in table 13.

Class 1-5 Farms

These four crops accounted for 52 percent of the total acreage fertilized in 1969, compared to 55 percent in 1964, 57 percent in 1959, and 57 percent in 1954. The fertilizer used on these crops represented 57 percent of all fertilizer used in 1969, 58 percent in 1964, 57 percent in 1959, and 53 percent in 1954. The increase in the tons of fertilizer used on these crops accounted for 2.7 million tons of the 4.8 million tons increase