

Impact of industrialized wheat farming history essay



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Industrialization had a great impact on all areas of economy; agriculture included; it came as a result of the problems and hardships which the farmers were experiencing in that era. Also the need for mass production of agricultural produce pushed for industrialization. Industrialization is defined as a process of economic or social change where by a society is transformed from a non industrial state to an industrial state. Industrialization is characterized by technological innovations and advancements.

The region of southern plains comprises of the states of:

Texas,

New Mexico,

Arkansas,

Oklahoma.

This regions climate is diverse; it ranges from subtropical climate to desert climate (United States Department of Agriculture). As wheat unlike many other crops does not require a lot of moisture, it did well in these regions ever since they began producing it. Industrialization in the USA is believed to have transformed farming methods from primitive ways to modern ways which also helped transform the whole U. S. A economy. According to About.com, the history of agriculture in the USA saw some notable changes which included, emergence of rubber tires for tractors and other machinery, and increased production of farm produce to emergence of machinery use.

During this era of the 1930s, wheat was so much in demand and it was one of the most used produce. (1930's Dust Bowl). According to Wessels: Living history Farm, it is suggested that industrialization came in handy to the farmers, before the emergence of use of machines, human energy was applied during farming, digging, weeding and harvesting were all manually done, these had an effect on the out put of the from the farms with increased demand for the produce new means of farming had to be improvised. It is also during this period that the American economy had experienced the great depression, which had an impact on the acquisition of the farm machinery which was to replace human and animal energy input in the farms.

During this era (1930s), some of the machines desired and made for wheat farming were:

Plows: which for the first time were mounted on tractors they replaced those which where mounted on horse pulled carriages

Planters: which were made and adopted for their accuracy and speed in seed distribution, they could also do a lot of work as compared to the ones they used before.

Mechanical cultivators: which emerged with the invention of tricycle tractors

Harvesters: invented in 1935 and could be operated by one person and saved the cost of hiring hundreds of people to clear the farms.

In the southern plains, when farmers adopted industrialized wheat

production in the 1930's a lot in the region and in the whole country
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changed. This southern plains region is where wheat farming was dominant, and was a great source of economy for the country.

Due to much demand for the wheat and availability of farming tools, vast grass lands were cleared and ploughed, this had an effect in the environment, as the open land was susceptible to soil erosion which affected the wheat growing region (Encyclopedia of Oklahoma history and Culture). This was also cited as the major cause of the 1930's dust bowl; the dust storms. This was because of the mass clearing of the vegetation to provide enough land to plant more wheat due to the demand that had come and The southern plains states where the chief suppliers of wheat: For example Panhandle millions of acres had been cleared. During the 1934 up to 1936 drought hit the land and it dried and due to lack of vegetation cover, the land was open and dust storms hit the region. After the drought, there also came a session of heavy rainfall that caused destructive floods.

Industrialized wheat farming in the southern plains had made farmers acquire farming machinery and equipment that were expensive, many farmers had got the machinery on credit and this was a strain to them, during the great depression, and the time of the drought, farming had become a nightmare as there was no money and rain to ensure a successful farming. Many farmers lacked money to pay for the maintenance of their farming equipments. This also led to over cultivating of the land in order to increase their income.

Availability of farming machinery and use of them ensured an increased cultivation of land and explained above, which consequently caused

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destruction of the land through soil erosion. As a result, this brought about a new concern of soil conservation that also led to new farming techniques and methods, (1930's dust bowl)

Due to mass production of wheat brought about by industrialization, their excessive supply which forced the prices to go down. This was also another blow to the farmers who were also recovering from the depression of 1930. They needed supplementary income and this also led to advancements of farming methods.

Due to the use of machines and other farm equipments there was reduction of farm workers needed to do the task, one harvester could harvest wheat in large scale more than what human labor could do (Schillinger and Papendick)

Despite the great depression experienced, the industrialized wheat production had a very good impact on the farmers. According to (Schillinger and Papendick) the life of the rural Americans who farmed wheat had began to greatly change. Horses were replaced by the fuel driven tractors, there was also a tremendous change in the way farming was conducted. These were also the period when there were wars and this had increased the demand for wheat, this also led to rural electrification which made life simpler and good in the rural farms.

Industrialized wheat production also led to growth of the other sectors of the economy. The machinery demand caused a rise and establishment of heavy machinery firms that satisfied the demand for the machinery and also for spare parts. Also the need for metals to make the machinery saw the <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-industrialized-wheat-farming-history-essay/>

emergence of metal industries consequently many people were employed to work in the firms and this saw a rise for new Labour force.

Industrialized wheat farming in the southern plains also led to specialization in different areas of production. Due to demands for mass production, wheat farmers who had combined wheat farming and keeping of animals turned to wheat production only. This also made sure that animal farmers also specialized in rearing their animals and their industry also grew.

Industrialized wheat production did well to the southern plains by boosting their image. For example, Panhandle's Texas County become one of the most important region in the whole country as it was the nations top producer of wheat with also other southern plain regions following behind.

The industrialized farming also led to major improvements in the manufacturing of fertilizers: For example the N fertilizer. There was N deficiency in the soils due to years of continued cultivation. The rotational growing of legumes to supply N was not possible because of the dry environment. When this fertilizer was invented, the crops had supply of nutrients from another source apart from water supply (Schillinger and Papendick).

In the 1920s the first major diseases had emerged and they affected farmers seriously. By 1932, with industrialization, scientist had invented agrochemicals which were helpful in fighting the diseases. Oregon Agricultural college release Alicel and Elgin id 1919 1d 1932 respectively (Schillinger and Papendick).

Industrialization also comes with its risks, use of machines and equipments also posed a health risk to the people who were involved in their operation. Accidents in the farms, pollution from the fuel powered machinery began to affects health of the people operating the machinery and also those in the regions where the machines were being utilized (Two Green Thumbs Down-Way down)

Industrialization led to the need for vast pieces lands due to the need of mass production to satisfy the high demand for wheat that was created due to the wars. This led to displacement of residents of the lands who where to create more land for farming. As a result other small scale farmers lost their lands to the large scale farmers, as mass production was believed to be the main trend in farming (Two Green Thumbs Down-Way down).

The emergence of industries and more milling factories and other industries that came up because of the wheat factory, led to urbanization of the rural area close to the firming areas. Facilities like electricity penetrated in the rural areas and this generally meant improved life styles among the natives. This also saw growth of small towns to big towns which also became trading centers.

Industrialized production included the use of farming chemicals. These Agrochemicals led to emergency of new diseases as they hazardous to life. The sprayed chemicals could move by air and water and affect people even in the neighboring southern plains regions. Also with much development in the agrochemicals sector, more and more diseases emerged and pose a threat to health of people (Two Green Thumbs Down-Way down).

Industrialized wheat production caused job losses. This is due to the massive usage of machines which replaced human labor. Many people were forced to look for other ways to satisfy their daily needs. This also caused rural urban migration as people went to look for employment.

As seen from the above points, industrialized wheat production had great impact on the southern plains region. The impacts were both positive and negative, but for the positive impact seems to out weigh the negative effects. Industrialized wheat production was a sign of overall nation prosperity that saw the emergency of even other industries in that time. Mass production also saw a start of a period of specialization that led to production of high quality produce with high quality. Such produce fetched a lot of money.

The great 1930 depression also affected the production of wheat at that time but due to the high demand of wheat the great southern plains region still prospered. Industrialized agriculture also as indicated in this work also saw the invention of new agrochemicals that proved to be good in fighting the common wheat diseases that had terrorized the wheat farms. Industrialized farming was indeed benefit to the local small scale farmers who had a big demand that they couldn't satisfy.

On the negative side as seen in the above work, the sand storm which occurred after the three year drought was also to a bigger percentage caused by the mass cultivation of the wheat, the land was cleared and when it dried due to large number of horses and lack of vegetation the soil was loose and this made the place be susceptible to the sand storms that hit the

region and disrupted normal human life. The use of the pesticides to be sprayed on the wheat farms, the fertilizers were also health hazards that were associated with emergence of new diseases that were known to claim lives. All in all this negative effect should be seen as the cost of a change in agriculture that brought new life style to the natives of the Great Plains region, therefore after analyzing these two sides we can conclude that, industrialized wheat production had a lot of effect to the southern plains region.